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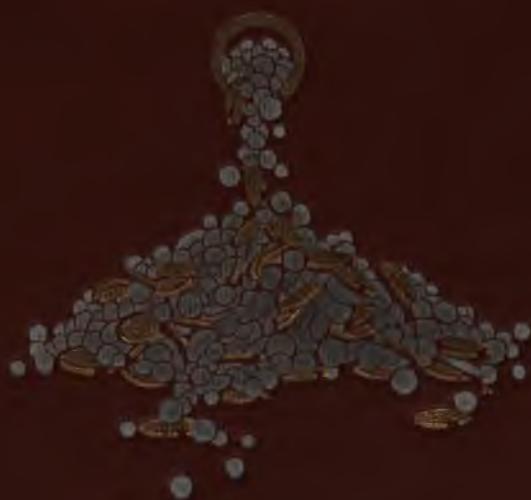
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Capitan Protheroe's Fortune



Oswald Kendall



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FORTUNE**

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“ This 'ere,” said Wilfred, “ is Capting Protheroe's
fortune”

[*Page 318*]

Captain Protheroe's Fortune

A Story of the Sea as Told to the Author by
George Henry Grummet, Mate of
the Schooner *Effie Dean*

By
OSWALD KENDALL

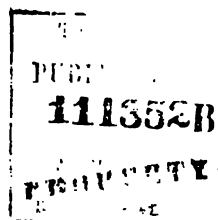
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To A. K., J. K., and J. M. K.,
this book is dedicated
by the author,
O. K.

43, 113

Then stooped the Lord, and He called the good sea up
to Him,
And 'stablished his borders unto all eternity,
That such as have no pleasure
For to praise the Lord by measure,
They may enter into galleons and serve Him on the sea.

— KIPLING.

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Captain Protheroe's Fortune

CHAPTER I

WE were seated upon the veranda overlooking San Francisco Bay, which, like some enormous mirror, reflected the deep ultramarine sky of California. The scene was a lively one, full of interest to a sailor, for ships of all sizes and all nationalities were crossing and re-crossing, or arriving through and departing from the Golden Gate to westward.

"Grummet," said Capt. Matthew Hawks, "I have bought a wreck."

"Yes, sir," said I.

"I repeat, Grummet," said Captain Hawks, "that I have bought a wreck."

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"You express no surprise?"

"Mr. Hawks," said I, for my commander, unlike most other master mariners, preferred to be plain "mister" to his intimates, "Mr. Hawks, I have now been many years in your employ, and —"

"Nothing I do surprises you. Well and good, Grummet. Now this wreck is that of the *Twin Brothers*. Her old man — Captain Protheroe was his name — has piled her up high and dry on an island 'way north of Bering Strait, plumb to the Arctic. She went ashore on a spring tide, and there she is, as dry as dry. So I have bought her — privately, you understand — and all inside her."

"Meaning sealskins, sir," said I.

He gave me a swift glance and nodded his head.

"Her captain was owner," he continued, "and on the night of the wreck he was — er — accidentally killed."

"I know that kind of accident, sir," said I, with a grin.

J. G. V. H.

"Just so. Well, old man Protheroe was a terror from 'way back, for which I do n't altogether blame him, considering the kind of men that ship before the stick. Be that as it may, his brother here in San Francisco became owner of the wreck at Protheroe's death, and it is from him that I have bought it. The crew departed, after the manner of crews, and are now goodness only knows where.

"They left the wreck in two boats that got separated in a gale — I guess you know what the Bering Sea can be like at times — and one of those two boats is missing. The other, with the second mate of the *Twin Brothers* in charge, arrived at Dutch Harbor, with most of her people frozen stiff. They came on down, those who happened to be alive, in one of the regular Alaska Development steamers, and were paid off.

"Now, it seems to me," said Mr. Hawks, "that there is a fortune waiting up there for any one who chooses to go and get it. So I have chartered the old *Effie Dean* to take us

up, and now I want you to rustle around mighty brisk and get me a crew. We must be alongside that wreck as soon as may be."

"No matter how quick we get there," I said, "it won't be before the Eskimos have skinned her clean to her bedplates, sir."

"Not they! She is a long way off the mainland."

"What about the whaling fleet, sir?"

"Five hundred miles or so to south and east'ard. Grummet, you are a croaker! We will waste no kind of time. The *Effie Dean* is an auxiliary. I shall have the papers with me to prove that I am the rightful owner, and if we should find any one there before us, and they do n't feel disposed to quit, and quit in a hurry, we can point out to them the error of their ways," and he grinned meaningly across at me.

"How many men shall I get, sir?"

"Eight. And anything will do that has two legs and a pair of arms and hands on it. Try and get Peter Scott as second mate. I

like him, he is a good man, and as close as a dead cow. We want no talking, Grummet."

"I'll go to the cockney's, sir," said I; "he's in the know."

"Yes, and get him to come as cook. See about it at once; I'm in a hurry. Get a warm outfit for yourself and charge it up to me."

"Thank you, sir."

As I took a car down Pacific Avenue, I was filled with many misgivings. I was uncertain of the future, for I was more than a little inclined to think that Mr. Hawks had bought a "bag of trouble," as we say at home in my native county of Essex. Then, a ship full of sealskins does not lie high and dry for long, even in the Arctic, without some one smelling her out. And if such were the case, I knew enough of Mr. Hawks to be able to form a fairly accurate guess as to what would happen. However, all this was no concern of mine; my duty was to obey orders, so I changed into a Kearney Street car, which hurried me south of Market.

So deep was I in my thoughts that I paid no heed to my surroundings, and engrossed in the consideration of this new venture of Mr. Hawks', I was only conscious of two men sitting near me on the car (who were talking earnestly together) without paying any particular attention to them until I was alighting. Then, just as I swung off the step, two words in their conversation aroused me like a shout. The two words were: "Twin Brothers," and I, recollecting Mr. Hawks' private purchase and his injunction: "We want no talking," decided, all in a moment, to have another look at these men, who were still seated in the front open part of the car. As the rear platform came by I swung aboard again, and walked forward through the car. One of the men was tall and thin, the other short and thick-set, and, despite the mild climate of San Francisco, he wore a red muffler round his neck. What the car conductor thought I do not know, for, as I again arrived in the front of the car, the two men, having apparently ar-

rived at their destination, got off, and so, of course, did I. I marked them well as they walked away, and wondered greatly at what they were about. Here indeed seemed justification for my fears that even if Mr. Hawks had bought the wreck her cargo would have disappeared before we arrived upon the scene. With these considerations crowding my mind, I made my way, deciding that the future, under Mr. Hawks' management, would not be lacking in event.

The little cockney, Wilfred Gee, or "Cert'nly" Wilfred, as he was more commonly known, from his amiable habit of reply, lived in that part of San Francisco known locally as "The Mission." Here, in a tenement house inhabited by a migratory community, he spent such leisure as he could afford, when not pursuing his vocation of ship's cook, with Mrs. Gee, a lady of generous proportions and Irish descent. I found him reading, while Mrs. Gee was audibly employed upon the family wash in a back room.

"'Ow are yer?" asked the little Englishman, with all his usual affability. "So old 'Awks 'as bought a wreck, 'as 'e?"

"How did you know that?" I asked, somewhat startled, for I knew that my commander was keeping things quiet.

"Oh, these little things get round the water front."

"Well, he does n't want it shouted," said I.

"Cert'nly not," replied the little man. "And who is doing the shouting, if I may arsk? Not me, old sport, not me."

"Of course I know that, Wilfred. Can you find a crew by night, and will you come along as cook?"

"Will I come as cook? Did 'Awks ever sail without me as cook? So both questions I arnswers, Yes, cert'nly, and will arsk two in return. What ship's 'e got, and 'ow many men will 'is lordship require 'is 'umble and willing servant, Wilfred Gee, to lay by the leg?"

"Mr. Hawks' ship is the *Effie Dean*," said I.

"What! The old hatrocity! She's as wet as thatch. Fancy bumpin' hice with 'er in the Harctic! O crumbs!"

Again I was startled.

"You seem to know a mighty lot about the wreck, Wilfred," said I.

"In course I do," he answered, shuffling across the room in his Chinese slippers. "The *Twin Brothers* is ancient 'istory, and 'as been known ever since Uncle John lost 'is model yacht. That boat is full of sealskins, and though she is in the Harctic, some bloke will 'ave found 'er, sure as eggs is eggs. Why, you could n't leave an old ragged dollar bill on top of Mount Saint Elias for long without some feller getting it!"

"Well," said I, rising, "you'll get those men, will you, Wilfred? Eight of 'em, by this evening? Hurry is the word."

"'Urry gen'rally is the word with 'Awks. It's 'urry or get booted off the poop."

"I shall be rather sorry for anyone he finds stealing the sealskins," I said, thoughtfully.

"So shall I," answered Wilfred, "for it's a carst-iron fact that 'e won't 'ave time to be sorry for 'isself!"

"You know Hawks as well as I do," said I, grinning.

"Cert'nly I do. A good man to work for, if you are any kind of worker. Oh, I knows 'im, and all 'is little tantrums. Well, do n't worrit. I 'll 'ave eight men aboard the poor old *Effie* this evenin', ready to sign on like lambs. They may not be so many dicky-birds," he added, with an amiable and toothless grin, "but they 'll pipe up loud enough when old 'Awks starts 'azing 'em in his usual Cape 'Orn way."

Then I told him about the two men on the car.


"That 's odd," said the little man, scratching his chin thoughtfully. "A bloke with a red muffler, yer say?"

I nodded.

"Do n't seem to like that, some'ow," said Wilfred. "Looks queer for 'Awks. What I

said about it bein' ancient 'istory is jest my little gyme. I 'eard about it by accident from a Chinaman wot's dead—'e was cook on the *Twin Brothers*, an' some friend of 'is disagreed with 'im and put a six-inch knife blade edgeways upwards in 'is back under 'is shoulder blades—but I did n't know anyone else knew. Well, there 'll be trouble; things will 'appen, you see if they do n't!" and the little man rubbed his hands with pleasurable excitement. "'Awks won't stand no funny dorg, 'e won't, not 'im!" he added.

As I left and walked along the street, I was glad that we were off on another cruise together—Mr. Hawks, the commander, myself, the mate, and Cert'nly Wilfred, the little ship's cook. We had seen many odd corners of the world together, and many an odd happening, and a curious friendship existed among us in spite of our official positions. Mr. Hawks was more than merely a master mariner; he was a financier of great ability, but his interests were usually concerned with the



sea, and usually led him, perhaps through a spirit of adventure, to take an active part in their direction. Cert'nly Wilfred was a cook to please Lucullus, but no wages could hold him ashore, for he, too, was imbued with the same spirit of sea adventure. And in the last respect, I was the same.

We each, in our different ways, were controlled by the same interest. The prospect of huge profit that an active life ashore could offer Mr. Hawks failed to keep him, any more than four hundred dollars a month as chef of a New York hotel could hold Wilfred; nor could a big salary as mate or commander of a millionaire's yacht tie me down to a humdrum life. So Mr. Hawks, the Californian of wealth and affairs, Wilfred, the undersized cockney from the East End of London, and I, the Essex fisherman, were in reality brothers.

The cockney was as good as his word. The men arrived at sundown, and they were certainly a pretty hard crowd. One might have supposed that Wilfred had been at some pains

to collect the very dregs of San Francisco; but I knew well that it was never easy, in that city of high wages and general prosperity, to find a full complement of hands for any ship.

First there came a middle westerner, farmer to his blunt finger tips, angular, clothed in heavy black, with a "hard-boiled" shirt. Next followed a huge one-eyed negro with a harelip, dressed in slop-chest garments that hung thinly about his massive shoulders. Then came a white-faced, dissolute-looking stoker, from some tramp steamer in the bay, with the visible marks of his late chief's active disapproval on and about his pallid face. Next — I was glad to see one sailorman among them — a white-bearded, mahogany-faced "shell-back," a wanderer upon the earth's surface.

Then there came a well-built, clean-looking young man, evidently from the university across the bay, and, so I judged by his build, something of a footballer, who had found suddenly that a change of air might be beneficial.

I felt sorry for him, for he could only have been twenty or twenty-one, and was full of young strength and ignorance.

"He will wish he was back home before this cruise is over," was my thought.

Two men followed whom, from their look, I put down as Germans recently paid off from a voyage round the Horn, and recently robbed of their hard-earned wages. Last, but not least, there came a long, lean, lantern-jawed, dark-haired westerner, with "hard case" written all over him.

"I must keep my eye on that man," I thought. "He is sure to have a gun on him, and any one can see with half an eye that he would know how to handle a pistol — a regular Arizona Jack!"

The little cockney brought up the rear, herding the men on board as if they had been sheep.


"'Ere's the crew, sir," said he to me, officially, and indicated the cluster of men with a sweep of his hand. "You said as 'ow hany

old thing would do so nany old thing is wot I 'ave brought!"

As the men followed the sailorman down the forecastle hatchway, and were out of hearing, Wilfred continued:

"That cattleman, the long 'un, you must watch. 'E ain't no kind to tyke 'ard words sweet-like. 'E would n't 'ave come only 'e is wanted pretty bad-like for hitting a man in Yuma with a fumed-oak stool. All the rest is the same as wot you 'ave jounced the fight out of for the parst fifteen years consecutive."

On the other side of the slip in which we were moored was a great iron sailing ship from Dunbarton, her masts and spars towering up into the now gathering darkness. Beyond her was a collier tramp, discharging a cargo of coal from Nanaimo, belching forth smoke and smuts that swept down upon us in a cloud. Round about us was a mass of small fry, set with the closeness of mosaic pavement. A little hermaphrodite brig was filling the air with language and manila warps as she tried



to get out of the slip. I watched her with some anxiety as she slid past our sides, and exchanged anything but compliments with her master, a prancing and voluble Frenchman.

Mr. Hawks came aboard about eight o'clock, just as we had got everything ship-shape, and then came our turn for hard words and manila warps. Mr. Hawks had got his clearance, and all we had to do was to sign on the crew and wait for a tug. It arrived an hour late and plucked us out into the bay, where we anchored for the night. Meanwhile we went through the business of dividing the crew into watches.

As only the two Germans, the one-eyed negro and the old salt were sailors, we divided them equally between the two watches, to have some one to guide the rest, for our crew was certainly a strange one. Then the men filed back into the forecastle until dawn, and Mr. Hawks and I leaned against the galley door and watched the little cook preparing some coffee.

"How are you, Wilfred?" asked Mr. Hawks, shaking the little man's hand, for the men were out of eyeshot.

"Very well, thanks, sir, and 'ow do you find yourself?" he said, with all the bland familiarity that we were used to when alone.

"Also very well, but we are both a year older since we took that cruise together in the Gulf. You are getting bald, Wilfred."

"Yes," said the cook, "but that, in a manner of speakin', is constitootional. My father, sir, was as bald as an egg, and for close on forty year 'e combed 'is 'air with a flannel rag. 'E was in the smoke 'addick trade, 'e was, 'ad a tidy little business, too, in 'Ack Street, Tidal Basin, North Woolwich, just afore you come to the Pig and Whistle public 'ouse."

As Mr. Hawks appeared to be in a talkative mood, I asked him about the island we intended to visit. He had been there once, he said, when a very young man, in a ship that had been badly mauled by the ice and had put into a harbor there for repairs.

"It's a dismal place, as I remember it," said he. "There are two islands and they are sixty-two miles apart, but I have only seen one of 'em, the one we are bound for. It's miles away from the whaling ground and plumb on the road to nowhere."

"So I understand," said Wilfred, rolling a cigarette, "and what I'd like ter know is — what was old man Protheroe doin' up there?"

"Is it a sealing island, sir?" I asked.

"No, the shore's too precipitous," answered Mr. Hawks, sipping his coffee; "cliffs are too high, and practically no beaches anywhere. There's a high mountain in the interior, always covered with snow, and the island is often visited by polar ice. Not just thin, cracked-up stuff, but the genuine article. From February to June it is usually beset, but you never can depend on the ice. No one knows where it will be or when, precisely, it is coming. I've heard of whale being driven into the harbor there by the ice, and being gradually driven up onto the rocks. A nasty

place for most things, whales or men. There was a ship wrecked there five years ago, and her people spent seven months on the island. Fortunately for them, four of those months were the summer months, but the ice never wholly left the island all the time. In fact, there was a stranded berg that was of the greatest use to them."

"To make ice cream of, I s'pose?" suggested Wilfred, without a shadow of a smile.

"No," replied Mr. Hawks, with an equally unmoved countenance. "They found an abundance of codfish always swimming round the berg. But there was one curious thing about those fish."

"Was their shadders froze to the bottom?" asked Wilfred politely.

"No," answered Mr. Hawks, turning; "they were all blind in one eye — the eye that was turned towards the iceberg."

"Pore things!" said Wilfred compassionately, and passed one hand slowly across his mouth.

We had anchored near the yacht basin off Suasalito, and the warm night was filled with the sounds of voices, banjos and pianos from the various pleasure craft at anchor, that had crept up to their moorings upon the last of the trade wind. Voices carry far across the water, and odd little scraps of conversation came to us.

"Is that kettle boiling?" would sing out a voice from someone stowing away the jib and foresail in the bows of a ghostly white shimmering yawl that hung motionless, apparently in mid-air, but a few cable lengths from us, while long lines of reflected light streamed from her open port-holes.

Then came a voice from farther away.

"Club-house ahoy!" it hailed.

"House ahoy!" answered the echo.

"Hallo!" This time a deep voice, and the creak and bang of a fly-screen door on the club-house veranda.

"Send a boat out to the *Manzanita*, will you, please?"

"Right!" replied the deep voice, and there followed the clatter of someone getting into a dinghy, and the rhythmical "Come-luck, come-luck, come-luck!" of one rowing.

A piano on a big steam yacht was crashing noisily. A motor boat came spitting and panting to her moorings, her two occupants conversing in shouts above the noise of her engines.

Before day had come a thick, white, blanketing fog set in. The *Effie Dean* ran and trickled with water, a perfect rain upon deck from the rigging above. Not a breath of wind stirred, and the air was hideous with the bellying of steamers and ferry-boats. I roused out all hands at four in the morning, and they, after their idleness ashore, were not very willing to turn out into the raw, foggy atmosphere of the decks. The fact that most of them were not sailors, and therefore not accustomed to obeying orders promptly, also caused some delay. But I gave them a chance, for we were still in harbor, and crews were not easy to get.

Mr. Hawks would see to it later on that they obeyed orders promptly. So, after ten minutes, they arrived, cursing and sullen, and I walked aft.

"Let 'em have breakfast first," said Mr. Hawks. "That will give it a chance to clear a little."

The meal which Wilfred — who had been up all night — had prepared for them was a surprise to the negro, the fireman, the old "salt," and the two Germans, who were used to the almost uneatable food given on most sailing ships. When the negro, who came aft for the food, was given a can full of mush, a bucket of hot coffee, several huge slabs of steak and a can of potatoes, he was at first astonished, then angrily incredulous, then finally speechless.

"Go hon, Cherry Blossom," said the little cook. "That's your grub all right! This 'ere ain't no 'ungry ship."

The negro ran through the fog, and dived, with a clatter of cans, into the forecastle,

where a babble of surprised voices greeted him.

It had always been Mr. Hawks' way to feed his men well, pay them well — and expect them to work well. If they did not fulfil their side of the contract, he made them so sorry for themselves that they were willing — generally in a very short time indeed — to do just what he wished. He gave every man his chance to prove himself, and a good man could never find a better master than Mr. Hawks. But the shirker, the lazy, the incompetent, the "Oh, I guess that's good enough" kind he treated with almost ferocious severity.

With all his usual audacity, my commander proceeded full tilt through the fog, and only his perfect knowledge of the bay and the Golden Gate prevented disaster. I was down below, attending to the engine, for there was no wind to drive us. I heard his voice ringing like a trumpet as he snapped out orders.

I wondered how the cattleman was taking it all, for your hard-case westerner is not ac-

customed to be told to do this and do that, and then have to do it. Already I could feel the schooner lifting to the long Pacific swell, and I knew that we were nearing the Heads. The negro started a chantey, and the squealing of blocks told me that sail was being set. Apparently a slight breeze had sprung up, for I felt the ship heel over, and just then there came an angry volley of words, followed by the crack of a pistol!

"The fun is beginning," thought I, as I mounted to the deck.

CHAPTER II

WE were clear of the Golden Gate, and the fog, rapidly breaking up before a good steady northwesterly breeze, revealed a sea thickly covered with whitecaps. The old *Effie Dean* upon a star-board tack, with every inch of sail set and drawing, was ploughing through the seas at an angle, with now and again the solid thump of a wave smacking her heavily upon the quarter, and the spray spattering as it fell on deck and trickled to leeward. She was being driven; every rope, standing or running, complained, and her progress was accomplished by creaks and groans, as if she were crying against her treatment after long months of idleness in port.

Forward of the galley, by the hatch, I beheld the big cattleman, showing fight. My arrival on deck was in time to see Mr. Hawks

deliver an uppercut with scientific accuracy and precision. The cattleman's legs gave way beneath him, as if they had been suddenly turned to cotton wool, and he fell heavily, all in a heap, to the wet and slippery deck.

A cackle of laughter came from the galley, where the little cook's head protruded.

Wake me early, Mother dear,
For I ham to be Queen of the May!

sang the cook, drumming an accompaniment upon a brass sauce pan.

Mr. Hawks stooped down, and relieving the prostrate man of his revolver, sent the weapon spinning overboard, and a moment after his cartridge belt followed.

The rest of the crew were on deck, the old "salt" at the wheel, the negro and the others busily coiling away the slack. To these two the episode held nothing new. The old man hardly glanced at it, and continued to clutch the spokes with his gnarled hands, looking by instinct first at the compass card and then



He fell heavily, all in a heap

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aloft, his eyes screwed up to mere slits in his mahogany face, scarred and lined by half a century of looking to windward.

But with the rest it was different. The stoker and the two Germans, it is true, bore no expression of great surprise, but the farmer, who early in the day had lost his broad-brimmed hat, stared with petrified wonder, while the light of growing indignation shone in his eyes; and the college boy gazed with undisguised admiration and some fear at Mr. Hawks' well-knit figure.

"Oh, he gave it 'im proper!" explained "Cert'nly" Wilfred a little later, when Mr. Hawks had gone below, after giving me my course. "I never see it done better. It all came about through 'is 'igh and mightiness refusin' to say 'sir' to 'Awks, who directly ups and, with 'is little props, slugs 'im 'ard upon the muzzard! 'E'll call hevery one aboard 'sir' now, 'e will, including the cat. Won't 'e, Sparks?" he added, as the cat that had been chartered with the schooner rubbed

an arched back against the little Englishman's legs.

"Well, he's been relieved of his gun, anyway," said I, as the cattleman slipped and slid about the deck.

"And 'e won't be likely to get another one where we are going to, neither," replied Wilfred. "Just as well, too. Guns in the fo'c'sle never did no good. They precipitytes 'ard feelin's."

The effect of this encounter was excellent upon the rest of the crew. Not that I anticipated any trouble from any of them individually, but men are easily led to open revolt by a strong personality and a capable leader; and the cattleman was both.

When Mr. Hawks came on deck at noon, he seemed in the best of spirits. He was clad in a blue woollen jersey and thick, rasping serge, for the day was fresh and wet, and the stiffening northwesterly wind was raising a steep sea. Gray, misty squalls of rain came down the wind, and added to the wetness of

everything. Mr. Hawks was carrying almost every stitch of canvas the ship possessed, and this, for windward work, fairly buried her in spindrift. Few of the crew had oilskins, and they went about shivering and miserable. The middle-westerner, the cattleman, and the college boy were as unhappy as seasickness could make them.

As night descended, the wind and the rain increased until, what with mist and flying spray, we could hardly see three hundred yards. The angry humming of the wind as it whistled shrilly in the rigging and boomed under the jib and foresail forward, together with the snarling, angry voices of the gray-green, tormented sea, drowned the groaning and creaking of the schooner.

Mr. Hawks and I had recently been upon a cruise together on his sailing yacht, and this change was terrific. The light spars and roller-reefing gear, the sweet and graceful lines, and the willingness to obey a spoke of the wheel, seemed to belong to another world than

this. For here we were, slugging northward like a half-tied rock in but a moderate seaway. The whole impression was one of strife and struggle, a single-handed combat between the old schooner and that turmoil of sea, and we men upon her decks seemed but sympathetic spectators, trying every trick born of long experience to assist the ship to hold her own.

"We'll be shipping it green before morning," said Mr. Hawks, cheerfully, as we stood together that evening in the shelter of the house.

"We shall, sir," I answered, "if we do not begin before."

As if in reply to my prophecy, the schooner took a sudden lunge to windward, wallowing deeply, failed to recover herself in time, and buried her nose in a solid wall of bottle-green water.

A thin wail of warning came from the half-drowned lookout forward, and sent the watch clinging desperately to anything handy. I

saw the cattleman, with unusual promptness for a landsman, run up the ratlines, and, holding on grimly, look down with startled eyes at the chaos of water thundering aft beneath him. His seasickness was completely forgotten for the time being. As the water drained off, the watch emerged, wet, gasping and spitting, and they anxiously eyed the forecathhead to see if there was any more coming. The negro, who had been a sailor all his life, and was therefore not seasick, and was, moreover, clad in oilskins, appeared all right. But the rest looked utterly miserable, wet, ill and frightened.

"Bit of a surprise-packet for 'em, that sea," said Mr. Hawks, laughing.

He looked aloft to where the cattleman was still clinging to his perch.

"Come down from there!" he bellowed. "What are you looking for? Birds'-nests?"

After a moment the man came cautiously down, but still clung to the bottom of the ratlines, ready to run up again. Evidently it

was a painfully new experience to him, and very different from cowpunching. While we still stood, the middle-westerner came staggering aft, fighting with the wind that tried to blow him over on his face, his eyes popping out of his head. As he had been completely ducked, his heavy, unsuitable farmer's clothing hung about him oddly. "Well, and what's your trouble?" asked Mr. Hawks.

I could not catch the answer, for it was whipped out of his mouth and carried to leeward. But I gathered that he was under the impression that we were all upon our way to certain death. He was carelessly driven forward by Mr. Hawks, while the negro, who was at the wheel, greeted the dismayed farmer with a guffaw of melodious laughter that was at once quelled by a glance from Mr. Hawks. The college boy was behaving well. He was sick, soaked, and rather frightened, as any landsman might be upon his first voyage before the mast; but he staggered about, green in the face, and trying to do his best. This Mr. Hawks was quick to notice.


"That boy is doing well, considering," said he. "But pshaw! what sops landsmen are, really!"

"College boy, I should say, sir," said I.

"Should n't wonder. Got into trouble of some sort, and is running away from home. Well, I guess he 'll learn."

One of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company's boats passed us on her way to Victoria, rolling her empty decks under. She came out of the smother astern so close to us that she had to throw her helm over hurriedly, and we could hear a bark or two of language from the officer of the watch addressed to the man at the wheel. Then he turned and waved a friendly oilskinned arm to Mr. Hawks, who flourished his cap in reply.

To my mind there is nothing half so delightful after four tempestuous hours on deck in blustering, cold, wet weather, as to go below to a warm, although perhaps stuffy cabin. The peace and comparative quietness sink into you as you seat yourself in a comfortable chair at ease.



Mr. Hawks, as I have said, never spared any expense in victualling, and as soon as I had removed my "oilies" "Cert'nly" Wilfred placed before me roast beef, baked potatoes, boiled onions and hot corn bread, followed by an apple pie of huge dimensions.

The muffled sounds from on deck but added to my comfort as I started vigorously to work upon the food. Wilfred was, as usual, in a communicative mood, and as we were out of the crew's sight, we dropped our official positions, and conversed as friends. After placing the pie upon the table, and wedging it tight in the fiddles with two pepper-boxes and a fork, Wilfred leaned genially forward and discoursed affably, while his thin, pale face was alternately lighted up and cast into shadow by the swaying lamp above.

All that night and the next day the wind and weather continued the same, rather wet, cold and unpleasant. The sea was not very heavy, yet it was difficult to tell when and where a wave might come aboard. For ballast we had

under hatches, as well as ordinary gravel, sixty tons of coal, from which I guessed that it was Mr. Hawks' idea to salve the *Twin Brothers* if it were remotely possible to do so. But all the same, we were rather high out of the water, which kept our decks drier than they might have been, but made the schooner a lively ship.

She developed a side-wise twist when descending the smooth green sides of a sea, followed by a wriggle that was unexpected, and which some of the crew could not get used to for a week or more.

As it is many years since I first went to sea, I fear that I did not waste much sympathy over the "seasickers," as Wilfred called them. Mr. Hawks, of course, paid no attention to them whatever.

Gradually, however, the seasick members of the crew regained their feet and digestions, and began to fatten on the excellent food served out to them.

The college boy openly adored his com-

mander; only the farmer and the cattleman — whom "Cert'nly" Wilfred had christened San Luis Obispo Jones, for no reason that I could discover — remained sulky. Never before had they been forced to say "sir" to anyone, or to obey an order without lengthy argument, and it went bitterly against the grain with them to have to acknowledge a superior.

There are great numbers of men who, by some chance or other, do not learn to obey orders until the iron hand of circumstances forces them, perhaps in middle life; then they learn with difficulty and much pain — to themselves.

The college boy took kindly to his treatment. He had the wit to see that to fight Mr. Hawks was to invite disaster. He was a thick-set, chunky young man, who had been a great football-player, and he was built in a fashion that had probably made him a useful member of his university team; but he was quick enough to see and realize that although he might be of considerable importance and

power on his campus, he was of little significance on board the *Effie Dean*. Whereby he saved himself some trouble.

I liked him from the first day I had seen him staggering about, green with seasickness and shivering with cold, but nevertheless "game as a pebble." He had a considerable opinion of himself — when he came on board — and a good deal of youthful swagger. He had signed on as "Green," but admitted one day, quite frankly, that that was not his name. He was, as I had supposed, the son of wealthy parents, who, like many others in his circumstances, had got himself into some sort of trouble through having too much money and too little attention.

This had ended in the usual way: an awkward scrape, an irate and unreasonable father, and an unhappy young fool running away to sea with an air of "You'll be sorry when I am gone!"

He had come aboard conceited, self-opinionated, ignorant, with a white, flabby face



and a cigarette forever between his lips. But a few weeks of separation from the evil influences that had been at work upon him, and a few weeks of iron discipline, brought out all the good there was in him — and there was plenty, once it got a chance.

For the first time in his life he had to obey an order, not voluntarily, not more or less, not tomorrow or the next day, but at once, and on the jump, or be sent staggering across the deck with a stinging blow from Mr. Hawks or myself. It was hard, maybe, but it was good for his soul.

He began to admire Mr. Hawks. Although I will readily admit that Mr. Hawks was not all that he should have been, his influence upon that young man was for the best.

As we were badly in need of another man who could stand his trick at the wheel with competence, and as young Green was quick and intelligent, both Mr. Hawks and I were at some pains to make a sailor out of him. An apt pupil we found him.

His parents, had they seen him, would have been surprised at the change in their son, now bronzed and hard with the hardness that comes of toil.

Mr. Hawks taught him first the points of the compass, and the correction of courses, and how to allow for leeway and variation. Then, during the young man's watch below, he would be instructed in the method of fixing the ship's position on the chart. Mr. Hawks had a passion for higher mathematics, and as Green had a good head-piece, I often found them in the cabin, Mr. Hawks concocting examples, and Green working them out. Together they took a ship all over the world, through every imaginable vicissitude, and in this way the young man was introduced to great-circle sailing, composite sailing, taught how to correct his position by heavenly bodies, how to construct an artificial horizon, and how to obtain his longitude by lunar observation.

With the theoretical side of a sailor's life



being rammed into him, illustrated by actual practice, it is no wonder that he soon caught the general lines of navigation and nautical astronomy and seamanship. It was a proud moment for him when he "shot the sun" one day at noon, and was congratulated by Mr. Hawks and myself after accurately fixing the ship upon the chart. In fact, he was so pleased with himself that a little of his old bumptiousness showed signs of returning, so Mr. Hawks sent him aloft to scrape down the topmast in a boatswain's chair — no easy or safe task, for we were rolling at the time in a rather nasty sea.

Apart from the fact that we really needed another man, I think that Mr. Hawks liked young Green, and, with his knowledge of life, understood the difficulties that surround a young man with too much money, and so purposely set to work to make a man and a sailor of the college boy.


Gradually his severity lessened, as young Green took shape, and occasionally he would

chat with him in a friendly way; and Green, who a few months before would have contradicted his betters, drank in greedily every word his commander uttered.

Meanwhile the old *Effie Dean* wallowed northward into colder climes, and the sea we sailed across was, perhaps, the most lonely ocean in the world, for not a sight of sail or smoke did we see. Just the round horizon, just the slate-blue sea, tumbling, cold and salt, with the wide arch of ever-changing sky overhead.

The days followed each other into weeks, the weeks into months, without monotony, for there was always too much to do. We had occasional gales, very occasional calms, and much rough, cold, wet weather. The rain changed to sleet, and the sleet to hail, and one day a blinding snowstorm began, and a wind that cut like a knife kept us double-reefed for one hundred and forty hours.


Early in the voyage we had begun to prepare for action with the enemy — in other



words, the ice. Ice anchors were got up, fitted, and placed ready for use. Our ice anchors were simply a bar of iron, rather pointed at the ends, and bent somewhat in the form of the letter S; and when used a man with an ice-axe jumps out onto the ice to which the ship is fastened, while another follows with an ice anchor over his shoulder, which is an implement it is not wise to slip and fall onto while jumping from the ship. Other men follow with a line, the first man over giving two or three jabs into the ice with his ice axe, thus forming a hole in which to insert the point of the ice anchor, the eye of the line to the ship being then slipped over the small end of the ice anchor.

Each day saw us rather north, and almost insensibly the climate changed. It was only when the mind was recalled to the comparatively mild winds of San Francisco that one realized we were in the Arctic. Then we had a genuine "dusting" and our crew did not like it at all. They had considered that the

double-reef breeze that had blown for one hundred and forty hours was quite bad enough, and as much as they should be called upon to endure. But the matters that control and direct the climate of the Arctic regions have a sublime disregard for humanity, and this our grumbling crew soon realized. In other words, there hove up over the southwest horizon the genuine article in the way of a wind with all its usual attendants of ice and snow. Down went the barometer and up came Mr. Hawks stiff with clothes. We were at the time doing some fine sailing, and Mr. Hawks hung onto the canvas set as long as, almost longer than, was safe. Steadily throughout the night the weather grew worse, and steadily we reduced canvas until about seven in the morning — and, oh! it was cold — we were hove to. This was for the first time, and most of our crew thought it was terrible — the last resort of a ship in distress — and at their manifest perturbation Wilfred raised his shrill voice in acrid derision.



A heavy sea coming on board completed their dismay, and blows were necessary before they would obey orders. The sea, I will admit, was a monster, and carried away part of our bulwarks, sweeping the deck like the hand of a giant and half drowning the watch in very cold water; but it was nothing out of the ordinary as far as really big seas are concerned. But it had an interesting effect upon the crew. The two Germans, the middle-westerner and the fireman were cowed, both by the sight and sound of that sea and by their complete ducking in that very cold water. But the cattleman, though frightened, would not show it, and realized that safety lay in obeying orders. The negro and the old salt, though startled, had seen and experienced such seas before, and went about their work warily. Young Green had been amongst those who had narrowly missed being washed over the side, and his escape, as well as the quelling effect of being one-eighth drowned in water very little above freezing point, and

then having to continue for three hours of his watch without change of clothing in a biting gale of wind, had knocked a good deal of his youthful "bounce" out of him, but he was as lively as ever in carrying out orders, for he was of a superior breed.

But it was soon apparent to both Mr. Hawks and myself that we were in for a genuine "snorer," and we made preparations accordingly. We battened down tight, and brought the crew aft. The decks became dangerous, and a man traversing the ship took his life in both hands and feet, and, awaiting his chance, would scuttle wildly, with goggling eyes. Never in their lives had some of our crew been so active! Wilfred, bringing the cabin meals from the galley, performed wonders, and only once met with an accident, losing a dish of curried beef and having to run for his life, yelling with irrepressible merriment all the time, turning about and shaking his fist at the sea that had stolen his curry and very nearly swept him into eternity.

"Drat it," said he. "Took my curry, it did," and then, waiting his chance, returned for the next dish, dancing with elaborate and humorous gestures of defiance at the sea in the moment's pause of safety.

We had four and a half days of it — quite enough — and then the sky cleared and the sea moderated, and we set to work to repair damages. The crew had naturally suffered a good deal. The forecastle had been flooded more or less continually, all their bedding and clothes saturated, and this in such a climate was no laughing matter. But a week of pleasant weather followed; cold but dry, and bracing beyond words to describe; and the crew began to regain their self-confidence.

But the Arctic never smiles for very long, and by way of a reminder of where we were we had a very fine aurora, forming an arch and ending in a serpentine form that brought all hands gaping on deck.

Wilfred, who was always amiable, allowed the crew to dry their clothes at the galley

stove, and taught young Green to sing cockney songs with a real cockney accent. Together they would howl away, the funniest sight and sound imaginable, for husky young Green was three times the size of the little Englishman.

Still, their efforts were extremely cheerful, and it was quaint enough to hear Green, who had never been farther east than Chicago, yelling allusions to the "Elerphunt and Cars-tle," to "Sem Isaac's in the Edgeware Road," and to the "keb-renk houtside Covink Gard-ing."

As soon as the American had perfected his London accent, he would sing the leading part, while Wilfred, who had no voice and hardly any breath, on account of bronchitis, would accompany with one word. Green would sing:

O Mister Porter, what shell I dew?
I wants to go to Birmin'am, and they 're tykin' me
hon to Crewe!
Tyke me back to London, es quickly es ye ken,
O Mister Porter! What a silly girl I am!

and Wilfred would keep up a running accompaniment of "Birmin'am — Birmin'am — Birmin'am — Birmin'am — Birmin'am!" and then break down with a cackle of laughter. Mr. Hawks would listen with a broad grin, for they both sang, or rather yelled, at the top of their voices, as often as not beating time upon a copper saucepan that resounded like a dinner gong. This was foolish enough, to be sure, but to a small group of men

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!

the cheerful noise was invaluable.

CHAPTER III

EARLY one bitterly cold morning there rose from several throats the cry of "Sail-O!" and every eye turned with sudden interest to the northern horizon.

"'Merican ship! I know her by her white canvas!" cried a voice.

"There's another," called a man in the bows, "and another — two — three — four — fi' — six! A whole fleet!"

Wilfred stuck his head out of the galley and gazed long and carefully. "Never seen them kind of ships afore?" he asked. "They ain't no 'Merican ships, nor yet British, they ain't."

Mr. Hawks was below, and it was my watch on deck. I moved about, stiff with clothes. Young Green, muffled up like a mummy, at the wheel, was softly marking time upon the grating to keep his feet warm. The schoo-

er's sails, dark and glistening, half-frozen and hard, were drawing steadily. The water that had collected in the lee scuppers was solid ice. The sea, almost black-blue, was dotted here and there with patches of foam; the sky, a salmon-pink and clear of clouds, threw into high relief those white specks upon the horizon. The watch turned to me to see why I did not call Mr. Hawks, and Wilfred's voice continued.

"Them ships," said the little Londoner, "are the kind wot 'as no owner. You will see more of 'em yet — ye may see a bloomin' sight more of 'em than wot you cares for, you may! Them ships is ice!"

The Bering Sea is the home of ice, for the long chain of mountainous Aleutian Islands in the south prevents, any warm current from the Pacific from having much effect, and the many rivers and deep bays of that region yearly discharge into it enormous masses of ice. I had been expecting it for long, and here it was at last. By noon the sea was cov-

ered, and our gaping crew worked the ship in a dazed manner, for it required considerable seamanship to avoid being wrecked. Fortunately the weather was clear with brilliant sunlight, a flashing, merry day, but perishingly cold. Even to a man who has often seen the ice before it is a fascinating sight. The danger and beauty of it hold one's entire attention, and the watch below remained on deck a good while. In the shadow of the bergs the water was a rich green, growing deeper and richer in color where the ice, hollowed out by the action of the waves, overhung the water. Here and there, in a particularly large berg, great cracks and caverns ran inwards, running through a dozen brilliant colours until the cavern sides were lost in gloom, and in and out the sea washed with an echoing thunderous sound. Each berg was covered with splashing waterfalls, the overflow from the lakes of melted snow and ice that lay far away in the ice-hills on the upper surfaces.

Frequently large pieces detached themselves

and fell into the sea, pieces as big as an eight-story house, which warned us to give these floating mountains a wide berth. One startling effect they had, which was due to the influence of some current far down below the surface of the water. All the ice was swinging along at about three miles an hour directly against the wind and sea, which caused a tremendous surf to beat upon their weather sides.

To describe the ice as "grand," or "magnificent," or "stupendous," the adjectives usually employed by story-book writers when picturing the Polar regions, conveys very little to the reader, for those very adjectives have been so often used and misused that they are worn out; I can only put down precisely, in commonplace words, what I saw, for at any time I am no hand with a pen.

The night came on with half a gale, and the sky became overcast with occasional snow flurries. It was an anxious time for us. We reduced sail till we had but steerage way, and so cold was the night that the spray, flying

aboard, froze at once and threatened us with being what Danish sailors call "over-iced," that is, completely frozen, with the rigging immovable and impossible to work in consequence. This, at a time when all our lives depended upon our being able to handle the ship like a rowboat whenever a berg showed up out of the night dead ahead, kept every man on the jump. Trying and dangerous as it was, we heard no grumbling from the crew. They were too scared to grumble, and obeyed orders like the crew of a millionaire's yacht. It was comical to behold!

Mr. Hawks, at all times a humane man when well served, gave orders that any man could have as much hot coffee as he wanted, whenever he chose, throughout the night — an unheard-of luxury on most ships — so Wilfred was busy. Men with freezing oilskins and startled eyes gulped down mugs of the hot drink, while Wilfred made fun of their obvious nervousness. Occasionally he would come out of his galley and "tyke a look

round," as he expressed it, whistling cheerfully the while.

Mr. Hawks, marked by a glowing cigar end, walked the poop, giving his orders in a quiet voice, unperturbed and extraordinarily upon the alert. Peter Scott and myself remained on deck also, and, as Wilfred expressed it, "it was quite a sociable evenin', with everybody about!" Then morning broke and showed us a sea more or less clear, and the blear-eyed crew swarmed about and crowded sail upon the *Effie Dean*.

I have made little mention of Peter Scott, the second mate, for about him there is little to say. He was an Englishman from Ludlow, who had run away to sea when a boy. He was a capable, silent man, a thorough sailor, but wholly without the art of speech. I never knew so silent a man, or one who smiled more dismally. He answered yes or no, he gave his orders without verbal embroidery, and his one passion in life was signet rings, of which he had a valuable collection.

Mr. Hawks, who liked all silent, capable men, would now and again endeavor to engage Scott in conversation, but the second mate would answer no more than common politeness and respect to his commander demanded. He was one of the best men in a fight, for he said nothing and stuck to the business in hand, and, as you shall presently hear, he proved himself a thorough commander. For, in charge of the *Effie Dean*, he sailed the schooner with a cut-throat crew several thousand miles, and that, I would point out, takes a man to perform. But he was as companionable as a stone wall, and less responsive than a tree. We three men, isolated by discipline, lived together for nearly six weeks before Peter Scott mentioned casually that he had a wife and family, and both Mr. Hawks and I exchanged quick glances of wonderment, for Peter, as a happy father and husband, was beyond our widest range of imagination.

We ran into a spell of fine weather (the

last we had for a long time), and though it was cold the air was extraordinarily clear, and it was during this pleasant time that I, for one, saw something that made a notch in my memory. According to custom, Mr. Hawks and myself always took the ship's position together, working out our calculations independently in order to check one another. But a bandaged thumb prevented me from handling a sextant with any degree of accuracy, and so it happened that Mr. Hawks alone "shot the sun." As I was taking down Mr. Hawks' readings, a man yelled "Land-O!" at the top of his voice, "Land on th' starb'd quarter!"

"Have a look to port!" called Mr. Hawks, grinning.

"Land again, sir!" answered the man, and the watch below came up in a hurry, and at the same time came Wilfred out of his galley.

Only dimly discernible was the land on either quarter, yet land it was unmistakably — land to westward, land to eastward.

"There," said Mr. Hawks, pointing to port, "is the Old World; and there (pointing to starboard) is the New. Asia and America both in view."

Our all-nation crew was now more or less in shape, although the farmer and "San Luis Obispo" Jones still did a good deal of grumbling at what they chose to consider their hard lot. And I should like to point out here what an easy time they had, compared with most crews. They had food that was better than that they would have received aboard an Atlantic liner, and, provided they did their work, they received no abusive language; in fact, a whaling crew or the crew of a Cape Horner would have thought themselves in clover, and everything would have been done with a "Cheerily-o, boys, cheer!"

But it was seldom we heard a chantey. The negro was always willing, at first, but the cattleman and Jones were the predominating influence in the forecastle, and because they had lived slack and lazy lives, and now found

work irksome, they persuaded everyone else how unfortunate they all were.

About this time we sailed into cloudy weather, and for days and days saw no sight of the sun, and the leaden arch of the sky remained unchanged. The days ran into weeks, and Mr. Hawks' temper was not of the best.

"I wish to goodness that I could get a sight of the sun, Grummet!" said he, one morning. "Dead reckoning is all right for a few days, or maybe a week or so, but we have n't seen the sun for — I forget how long — and we may be — I do n't know where. I got a lunar ten days ago; since then, nothing. The sailing directions are a farce, pure but not simple. They speak of a nor'-wes'-'nd-b'-west drift. Well, I guess that may or may not be working at this time of year. I do n't know. Anyway, I have allowed for it, so I hope the pesky thing's in working order."

He stumped up and down a minute or so, looking as black as the sky overhead.

"First thing we know," said he, savagely,

"is that we 'll be punching a hole into Asia!"

"Have we made all that westing, sir?"

"Perhaps not yet, but I 'll tell you straight, Grummet, that I do n't know within fifty miles of where I am."

"You 're probably not half so far out as you imagine, sir," said I, soothingly.

"Grummet, you are like too many sailors, inclined to trust overmuch to dead reckoning. You have been at sea, I know, for thirty years, and could smell your way round the world, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred hit the ship on the chart with your eyes shut; but the one hundredth time you do n't; you hit a rock instead. Dead reckoning's all right in some places, but this is n't one of 'em, no, not by a thousand miles or so. I will guarantee to take a ship across the Atlantic, from New York to London, without a sight of the sun, moon or stars from the time we leave the Hook until I tie up under the Tower Bridge. But here it's different. Why, there is no certainty in the variations of the compass!"

This uncertainty of the ship's position kept Mr. Hawks in a raging bad temper, and when not bellowing orders in a voice that carried a good mile, he maintained a gloomy silence. In this way days would pass with never an unnecessary word spoken aboard the schooner, except, of course, by "Cert'nly" Wilfred, who was unquellable either by Mr. Hawks or by anyone else.

But I had great faith in Mr. Hawks. He was a magnificent navigator, and his observations and corrections were well known at Lloyd's. After going carefully over his calculations at his request, I was in no way put about for the safety of the ship.


And I was right. In the midst of a powdering gale that had been blowing for nearly a week, we raised the jagged peak of the island, and the sun, now that we did not need it, burst through a rip in the clouds and shone red upon the snow-capped mountain head.

"Well done, sir!" I shouted enthusiastically, and Mr. Hawks laughed gaily.

Then a squall of sleet and snow and hail descended, and with it a cold, black, impenetrable night. We hove to, and anxiously watched the schooner, only making sail in a bleak dawn with every rope frozen and the decks slippery with ice. For once the negro raised a chantey, and the crew tailed off to

Masthead that yard, it ain't too hard,
To run the capstan round, boys!
Haul in the slack, an' do n't-a hang back,
Or the mate 'll comb your hair, boys!

With all sail set, we bore down upon the island, that appeared but a snow-capped rock sticking several thousand feet up out of the sea. A most desolate and forbidding spot it looked. But it was the first land we had seen for many a long day, and every man was on deck, staring with interest. You may be sure that Mr. Hawks, Peter Scott, and I were all three examining the island through our glasses, to catch the first glimpse of the wreck we had come so far to find. "Cert'nly" Wilfred was as anxious as anyone. He



stood upon the roof of the galley, with a magnificent pair of binoculars which had been presented to him by the United States government for saving life at sea, and which contrasted oddly with his ragged garments, now flapping about in the wind as he stood swaying about to the roll of the ship. Now and again his observations were interrupted by a fit of coughing.

"I believe she has crumpled up and gone to pieces!" said Mr. Hawks, in a savage undertone.

"She may be on the other side of the island, sir," said I.


"Last night's gale must 'ave shook her, sir," said Scott, gloomily, for he was ever one to look upon the dark side first.

I expected some violent reply from Mr. Hawks, but he was too intent upon staring through his binoculars. It was an exciting moment when we rounded a rocky headland and eagerly scanned the coast revealed. And it was bitterly disappointing to behold only

black, towering cliffs, running far on to the north, like the joints of a telescope.

We kept the ship well away from the shore, for the sea was heavy, and the charts none too accurate. Toward the middle of the island there rose a great peak, crowned with everlasting snow, although here and there the rocky sides were either too steep or the perpetual winds too strong to allow the snow to lie. Round about the base of the cliffs were echoing ice cornices, hollowed round by the action of the waves, but beach of any sort we could not see. And there was no verdure, just black rock and snow, and multitudes of sea birds circling high in the air. It looked a dreadful place, so lonely, so deserted, so unvisited by man, so forgotten, bleak, and terrible.

I almost shivered when I looked at it and thought of what a winter would be like spent upon its shores, and I do not think there was a man aboard who did not imagine our future, should Mr. Hawks make a mistake and wreck



the schooner upon the many outlying rocks. But as we approached nearer, some signs of vegetation were visible — scrubby bushes, hardly a foot high, growing in scattered patches.

Again we rounded a jutting headland, and a hyena-like yell, that ended in a burst of coughing, from Wilfred, and the closing snap of Mr. Hawk's binoculars heralded the discovery of the wreck. High and dry she was, heeled over heavily to port upon a long rocky promontory some five miles up the coast!

We shortened sail and closed in with the land. As we approached the wreck we opened out a landlocked harbour, which the *Twin Brothers* had evidently been trying to make when she was wrecked.

In half an hour Mr. Hawks was out in a boat, taking soundings, while I took over command of the ship; and in an hour he returned, the crew of the boat looking drenched, cold and miserable. He had found a deep channel running right into the harbour, and none too

soon, for a southwesterly gale was steadily blowing up.

While he had been away I had taken in all sail, and was standing off and on under the engine. We crept warily in, and dropped anchor in sixteen fathoms, the noise of our cable echoing among the cliffs. These came down on all sides to a narrow ribbon of beach littered with blocks of ice.

But before we anchored, the wind outside had increased to a full gale, and then it was that we noticed a most startling and uncanny phenomenon. Now and again, owing to some twist or intricate passage between the high cliffs, which must have acted in some way like a whispering gallery, the wind at first rumbled, as if in a Brobdingnagian chimney, then hissed like escaping steam, and finally ended in a long, unearthly wail. We were all of us startled; the old "salt," the negro and the fireman were frightened and aghast; the farmer, "San Luis Obispo" Jones, and even stolid Peter Scott, dismayed and unnerved by

its unexpectedness; the two Germans calling upon their native land in their native tongue; and I will readily admit that both young Green and I were, for the moment, rooted to the spot. Even Mr. Hawks was startled, and looked about him quickly, as if expecting some attack.

Only "Cert'nly" Wilfred remained unmoved, and I verily believe that undersized little man was afraid of nothing on earth. As that dismail wail died down to a gasp, and we stood silent, struck in various attitudes of surprised alarm, the cockney came out of his galley, with a pan in one hand and the lid in the other, and gazed about him in an interested way, as he sang:

Oh, do n't you 'ear the whistle sy
'Hit's time to knock orf work' ?
And do n't you know the blackleg's wy
Of knowin' 'ow to shirk?
But the foreman wiv a spanner
Will their silly 'eadpiece 'ammer,
Hon the Hatcheson, Topeka, Santa Fy!

Mr. Hawks wheeled round sharply and grinned at the little man.

"Queer!" said he to me.

"Never heard anything like it before, sir," said I, still a little startled.

"Here it comes again!" cried young Green, in a now-or-never voice. And sure enough, it began rumbling, then hissing, as it had done before, completely drowning a terrified rush of Norwegian from the old salt.


Before it had finished, Mr. Hawks bel-
lowed a stentorian "Let go, there!" The
men obeyed in a dazed fashion, and the anchor
roared down into the deep water. As that
unearthly wail died down, we could hear the
little cook in his galley, singing at the top of
his voice, and this, as much as Mr. Hawks'
rapidly given orders, restored the crew to a
more reasonable state of nerves. But that wail-
ing continued at intervals, and it was some
time before we could get used to it.

Mr. Hawks was now all agog to get on
board the wreck, but the gale outside made

this impossible; for after one attempt, when the entire boat's crew was nearly drowned, he returned to the ship in a very bad temper, and decided that there was nothing to be done until the weather moderated.

To be so near to knowing whether the voyage was to be a success or a failure, and yet to be prevented, was difficult to stand. If the wreck were full of sealskins, and had been untouched, then indeed the profits of the cruise would be stupendous. If, by any unseen chance, the wreck were empty, then his loss would be crippling, for he had taken — I thought — a mad risk when he paid good money for her. Yet there was nothing to be done until the wind and sea went down, for when it ran so high it raced across a portion of the promontory, and cut off the wreck by a broad gap of foaming surf.

Being anxious to stretch my legs on dry land, and as there was little to be done, I was readily granted shore leave, and Wilfred, the ever-active, accompanied me. We rowed



across the harbor and landed upon a strip of beach that lay before a cleft in the towering cliffs; and we stepped upon the slippery stones with some enjoyment after being cooped up so many weeks in the narrow limits of the schooner.

When I returned to civilization, nearly a year later, I chanced upon a book in which the island was mentioned. The account was given by a scientific expedition, and was as dry as such accounts usually are, except to the enlightened few. The flora of the island, I was amazed to read, consisted of about ninety-three species of phenogamous — whatever that may mean — plants, which grow in patches with stretches of bare gravel between.

They were quite right about the bare gravel; we saw lots of it. As for the ninety-three species, the *Ranunculus glacialis*, the *Cerastium alpinum*, the *Arenaria biflora* and the *Eriogon uniflorus*, and so forth, I do not wish to think those learned gentlemen wrong, so I suppose the plants were so small that we did

not see them. If I had only known it at the time, I would certainly have told Wilfred that there were ninety-three species of phenogamous plants, just to see in what particular way he would have told me that I was a liar.

But there were polar willows in considerable numbers, and these I pointed out to Wilfred. As the polar willow is a single pair of leaves stuck on a "trunk" as thick as a straw and reaching but a few inches from the ground, Wilfred intimated that he had doubts of the accuracy of my statement.

"Garn," said he. "Thet a willer? Yes, I do n't think!"

"It's a willow, all the same," said I.

"Do n't yer try an' be funny, Grummet; you carn't do it reely, and yer efforts are pathetic."

We slipped and slid over the stones towards the break in the cliffs, and discovered a steep and narrow cleft that led upwards. Through this we climbed, and arrived breathless at the top. Here we sat down and contemplated a

fine view of sea, sky, and island, and the schooner, looking like a toy ship at anchor.

Mr. Hawks had been right in describing the island as a dismal spot, and yet it was not without a certain savage charm of its own. The sea roared distantly, and, still higher above us, the wind whistled shrilly, but it so happened that we were seated in a sheltered valley, and here an unearthly stillness dwelt. No shrub or tree in sight, the gravelly soil was covered in patches by the polar willow that Wilfred scorned. Solitude was no name for our surroundings; it was more as though the dawn of creation had only just begun and life was still waiting to be called into existence. The scant verdure appeared crushed by the very terrible nature of the winters, and had, in a way, accommodated itself to its conditions. Thus the willow, instead of growing upwards into the sunlight, as it does with us, grew under the ground, running along some inches under the surface, only throwing up the puny branches we had seen.

"No," said Wilfred, after deliberation, shaking his head, "no, this 'ere place as a seaside resort 'ud never pay, it would n't. Though it might do as an 'ome for the indignant blind. Blimmy! Think of this 'ere island in winter, eh? Wot precisely is the latitude, Mr. Myte?"

"Only seventy-five and a bittock," said I, "but there is no Gulf Stream coming through Bering Strait, as you may have noticed."

"Wot it is to be a bold navigator and to know all the currents in the sea! But seein' as 'ow the steam 'eat, in the shape of the Gulf Stream, 'as been an' turned orf at the myne, wot, I arsk, can you hexpect? Did you think it would be 'ot? Anyway, heverythink 'as got its bright side. I contend that these 'ere hicebergs looks very pretty, stuck about like, and doubtless 'ave their uses in keepin' cool and temperate an otherwise tropical climate."

"If Hawks can't get aboard and find if his sealskins are there or not—" said I.

"'E'll get into one of 'is rare little tan-

trums, 'e will; and it will be a case of stand from hunder, all 'ands."

"Now that I have seen the place," said I, "and realize how hard it is to get at, I think there is a very good chance of the skins remaining untouched."

"So do n't I," answered the little man, the meaning of which was rather obscure.

"But I expect trouble any moment from the crew. They have been overfed, and are fair ramping."

"Yes, a rare old rackety go, like a mix-up at Wonderland, somethink real and spicy," he said, with relish.

Our descent was difficult, owing to the loose rocks that a touch would send thundering down to the beach; so we climbed down together, keeping as level as we could. Wilfred, despite my warnings, wasted much energy in rolling downward every loose stone he could find, and crowing and dancing with delight at the imminent risk of his neck.

On the following day we got the hatches

off, and many tons of Californian gravel were dumped into the harbour. Mr. Hawks, in a boat manned by young Green and the negro, hovered about the harbor mouth, waiting for the sea to go down. But he was forced to return to the schooner, and he was in a temper that made it a risk to speak to him, even upon the business of the ship.

The day remained fine, except for a flurry of snow that came about noon and plastered everything upon its eastward side with a coating of white. Then the sky cleared; but the surrounding cliffs were so high that the sun only glanced into the harbor before it set, and it froze hard all day. The cold, clean air gave every one a stupendous appetite, and brought a tinge of color to even "Cert'nly" Wilfred's pale face.

That island indeed was a place of surprises, and, lying deep in the shelter of the harbor as we were, we could no more judge of the weather outside, than a man could who was seated in the cellar of a particularly well-

built stone house. Then we made a discovery, and, in its way, it was as surprising as that melancholy wailing had been. I have already remarked upon the extreme height of the cliffs surrounding the harbor (where Wilfred and I had climbed to was where the cliffs were the lowest), and down these cliffs splashed innumerable waterfalls, all disappearing either in spray before they reached the beach, or hiding themselves in crevices of the cliff face. But on the evening when Mr. Hawks finally started out for the wreck, we were amazed to note the sudden appearance of a waterfall of very considerable dimensions falling sheer from the cliff top near the harbor mouth. So conspicuous was this mark that we were all absolutely certain that it had not been there the day before, though it might have existed, unnoticed by us when occupied with the precarious business of entering the harbor with a gale blowing up astern.

And the disappearance and reappearance of the waterfall turned out to be a fact, and

we soon came to regard it as a wind gauge and auxiliary barometer. This cascade, and it was a considerable river above, fell some eight hundred or nine hundred feet. In stormy weather the wind eddying among the cliffs blew the fall into spray which soon dissipated in the atmosphere. In calm weather the fall was intact. This gave us a good idea of the kind of wind that blew upon the cliffs, and Wilfred and I decided that we had better be careful how we scrambled about in the future.

"You'd go up like a kite, you would, Grummet," said Wilfred, eyeing the waterfall, "if a breeze big enough to blow that their fountain away was ter catch yer."

"And you?" I asked, grinning down at him.

"Me! I'd go orf like a strawr 'at, I would, syle awye like a bird! Blimmy! but this 'ere's a rummy plyce, wot with the whistlin' an' all."

Then, in the long evening twilight of those high latitudes, Mr. Hawks again made an ef-

fort to get on board the wreck, and he was away about three hours. This time he was successful, and when he returned he motioned me to follow him below.

"Grummet," said he, "the *Twin Brothers* is a sloop-rigged steamer. She is in good condition, but — *she is as empty as a drum!*"

CHAPTER IV

YOU do n't mean it, sir!" I cried aghast at the news of the empty state in which the *Twin Brothers* had been found.

"Of course I do! I'm not being funny!" snarled Mr. Hawks. "And now I suppose you will say, 'I told you so!'"

Knowing Mr. Hawks as I did, nothing was farther from my intention.

"She is scoffed clean," continued Mr. Hawks, in a vibrating undertone that I knew, "not only of her cargo, but of everything movable, and, judging by the filth and smell, by Eskimos. If I could only get hold of the dirty crowd!" and he raised his big powerful hands and worked his fingers in his rage. Suddenly he wheeled round, and in an access of fury, cried, "Where's that cockney? I want some supper!"

The best thing to do with a big, powerful

man in a rage is to feed him, and I got quickly to my feet to call Wilfred before any damage was done. But as I did so, the cheerful little Londoner descended, with a tray loaded high with savory-smelling food.

"'Ere you are, sir. 'Ere's your grub, 'ot and strong, the best you ever 'ad since Uncle John lorst 'is model yacht."

I waited, expecting to see Wilfred incontinently felled to the ground for this inopportune levity; but Mr. Hawks suffered him to finish, merely regarding him with an expression of gloomy foreboding.

"Wilfred," said he, finally, and his voice was as soft as velvet in tone, "close your head, finish bringing in the supper, and get out."

"Yes, sir, cert'nly," replied Wilfred, wholly unaffected.

We ate our meal in silence until the end, when Mr. Hawks, somewhat soothed by Wilfred's excellent cooking, looked up and spoke.

"This pie is good!" he snapped. Both Peter Scott and I agreed with him, as we

would have done had he said that the pie was bad. Another long pause followed, and Scott, having finished his meal, mumbled some excuse, and fled on deck. Mr. Hawks and I, however, knew one another so intimately that by some mysterious means I was aware that he wished me to stay below and talk things out with him, so I waited.

"The fact of the matter is, Grummet," said he, after a period of silence, "that it is a fool's game buying wrecks six thousand miles away, and I guess I was an idiot to go into the business. To do him justice, Captain Protheroe's brother, who came into possession of the wreck at the death of the captain, pointed out to me all the difficulties and doubts—for which I take him to be an honest man. But I was wooden headed, Grummet. The thought of those sealskins worked on my imagination. They made me feel giddy, so I had to have my try. Now I have done so, and have been left—badly left.

"I wish the *Twin Brothers* was alongside

her former commander — at the bottom of the sea! And thereby hangs a moral. The man who habitually hammers his crew, and generally plays the bucko to excess, whether his crew need it or not, is the first man to lose his life if he wrecks his ship. There are a dozen ways of killing a man, and they are all made easier in times of great excitement, like a shipwreck, with a lot of spars tumbling down about your head. Captain Protheroe, by all accounts, was tough, and I guess some dock rat he had crippled, who had a grievance, stuck a knife into him and put him over the side.

“Well, Captain Protheroe has gone, and it is the wreck he has left behind him that concerns us. Go off tomorrow and have a look at her yourself. Scott can stay and fill up the water tanks. If only I could salve her, I might see my way out with a profit. When I was returning to the ship I saw a school of right whale, and it crossed my mind that we might have a try at a little whaling. We have one

whaling boat and outfit, but pshaw! it makes me sick! As things are, I guess this spells my financial finish. I'm about done; I'm a rare edition; a back number, and warranted tame to ride and drive."

"Hardly that last, sir," said I with a grin.

"What a laugh I'll get in Frisco! Every dock rat and insurance clerk on the water front will split his sides. But you go off tomorrow and examine her for yourself, and let me know what you think. I'm afraid that she *must* have knocked her bottom out when she took the rocks, and I suspect that she fills and empties at every tide. I was there at half tide. I had an idea, when I left Frisco, of maybe refloating her; but of course I had no notion that she would be so high out of the water. I wonder she has n't broken up before now. It might be worth our while to wait —" He paused.

"Exactly so, sir," said I. "After all, an abnormal tide put her there. I do n't see why, with another, she could n't be got off."

"I have the date when she went ashore. I'll look it up in the table," said Mr. Hawks, brightening suddenly. "My word, Grummet, if I could see my way to salving her, I'd be a steamer to the good, even though she may have lost her fool gimcrack fittings! Though the cargo is a big loss. I'll figure out when the next abnormal tide is due, and if we get a wind in the right direction, and a high barometer, we may fix her yet!"

His ill humor began to be dispelled by this prospect, and the very obstacles, well-nigh insurmountable, seemed but to add to his growing cheerfulness. This trait in Mr. Hawks' character I had often noticed before, after he had blown off steam a bit. It always gave me confidence in him, however tight the corner we had been in together.

Early the next morning I lost no time in getting the dinghy over the side, for I had intended to visit the wreck alone; but "Cert'nly" Wilfred was so anxious to come too that the extraordinary spectacle was wit-

nessed of the mate at the oars, while the ship's cook sat in the stern; for Wilfred could no more have pulled against the strong incoming tide than he could have flown. Once away from the ship, we dropped our official positions — as we always did on such occasions — and felt for all the world like two schoolboys on an unexpected half holiday.

"You mark my words, Grummet," said my companion, swaying in unison with me as I rowed, "if 'Awks says as 'ow 'e's goin' to float that old wreck, 'e bloomin' well will!"

"He can't if she has stove her bottom in, fore and aft," said I.

"Yes, 'e will, cert'nly 'e will. 'E'll give 'er a new bottom out of stones and ice and such little things." He added, affably, "Oh, I like 'Awks, I do! 'E's all wool and a yard wide, warranted not to grow sorft and pulpy in 'ot weather. But 'e's a short-tempered brute."

Once across the harbor, we began to realize the enormous height of the surrounding

cliffs. The schooner looked like a model boat at anchor. The water was a deep bottle-green, so clear that we could see down for many fathoms. As we approached the harbor mouth, the great peak in the interior of the island came into view. The white and glistening snow, that came nearly to the top of the cliffs, contrasted grandly with the black, uncovered rocks about us. The background of the scene was a cold, leaden sky, the finishing touch to the impression it gave of forbidding solitude.

"I allus enjoys a cruise with 'Awks," burst out Wilfred, "so much gen'rally 'appens! An haitch and a hay, a *w*, a *k*, and a hess spells 'appenings!"

"And I do n't think you will be disappointed," said I. "Things are bound to happen with that overfed crew for'ard."

"Them?" asked Wilfred, contemptuously. "Oh, I dessay! But they are overfed. Gluttony will be the death of the whole crowd, that is, if 'Awks ain't."

By this time we were nearing the actual entrance to the harbor, and as the tide was running strong, and as there was a nasty lump of sea running outside, which roared and spouted up on the promontory and was already beginning to lift the dinghy in a lively fashion, we decided to land and walk out over the rocks to the *Twin Brothers*.

So, choosing with some care the shelter of a large rock that ran a little way out into deep water, and which had caused a few yards of shingly beach to accumulate, we ran in and hauled the dinghy up high and dry. We clambered up on the promontory and started out on our mile-and-a-half scramble to the wreck.

It was heavy going, and dangerous, too, for in many places a slip would have meant a broken leg. The little cockney gave me a good deal of anxiety, for several times he was nearly blown off his feet, and as he was a sufferer from bronchitis, his breath was short. He came along gamely enough and I was con-

tinually warning him. He paid no attention, in fact, rather resented my cautions, remarking that what was his, was his, and not mine.

By the time we had arrived at the wreck, what with the wind and the scrambling, Wilfred was beyond speech, so I picked him up. With him on my back — for he was as light as a child — I crawled up without much difficulty, for, as I have said, the wreck had a heavy list to port. On our hands and knees we worked our way aft, across the sloping, rusty decks; and once in shelter, Wilfred began to regain his breath.

The *Twin Brothers* was of a type to be met with frequently on the Pacific coast, and engaged in all manner of trades, from humdrum cargo carrying to illicit sealing. And, unless I was greatly mistaken, the *Twin Brothers* had been for many years quietly and unostentatiously engaged in this last most profitable and dangerous business.

She was not unlike a Grimsby steam trawler, only, of course, larger, with wonder-

ful cargo-carrying capacity. Huge bunker space spoke eloquently of the long voyages she had taken, and of her independence of coaling ports. This, in itself, looked suspicious to me, for why should an honest trader, plying upon her lawful business, desire to avoid land, and remain six months away from respectability?

While Wilfred rested, panting, in the shelter of the house, I went and had a look into her holds. The hatches were off, and had been removed bodily, and I was startled to behold a quantity of water with a thick cake of ice on top. I was startled, because the tide was low and the steamer high and dry.

"Wilfred!" I shouted. "Come here!"

"Wot is the bloomin' 'urry? Carn't a pore feller ragain 'is pore breff in peace and comf — 'Ullo! Water? But she's 'igh and dry, ain't she? And it's fruz, too! So I bet it's fresh water, at that!"

We both scrambled to the side.

Yes, the *Twin Brothers* was high and dry,

and we turned and looked at each other in astonishment.

"Then why," I asked, "did Mr. Hawks say that she was stove in fore and aft?"

"'Cause he was mad, or ill. But no, it was 'igh water when 'e was 'ere. Very well, then, 'e thought as 'ow she filled and hemptied at every tide, sieve-like."

"And if there is water in her that can't get out—" said I.

"Precisely, Sherlock. There is water hout-side 'er wot can't get in, plenty of it, too! Oh, my brave boy, your powers of pure reasonin' are —"

"But she must have started some plates forward. Old Protheroe must have been a fool to try and make the harbor in a gale, with this little bunch of rocks waiting for him to get blown onto."

"'E must 'ave known the 'arbor pretty well, even to try it! And 'is old sardine tin must 'ave fetched up with somethink like a bump when 'e landed, and a nice pleasant

time of it them fellers must 'ave 'ad gettin' orf! Oh, my eye! Fancy this 'ere place with an 'igh sea running!"

We examined the wreck most thoroughly — a depressing job. Her interior accommodations had been picked clean of everything movable, and what furniture she had once possessed was by now, in all probability, the pride and glory of many an Eskimo igloo. In her iron charthouse, which was upon the upper deck, and was also a wheelhouse, and which was lined with redwood paneling, the settee had been uprooted and carried away, together with her lamps, chronometers, clock, charts, glasses, and all the paraphernalia of a living ship.

"I always likes to see a job done proper," remarked Wilfred, looking about him with his bright, intelligent yellow eyes. "They did a thorough piece of work 'ere, them Heskimo did. Took all they could. Wonder they did n't tyke the doors. Would 'ave done it, I s'pose, but, bein' as 'ow they are of iron they

was a bit too 'eavy like to carry. One is locked, I see, and the key in old Protheroe's pocket."

There was a stairway from inside the chart house, running down into the cabin below, and down this we stumbled, our feet clattering noisily in the empty ship.

"He liked keeping dry," I commented, "or he would not have had this stair built. Look at the handrail — a four-inch pipe. I should say he put that in himself afterwards."

The cabin below, out of which opened others, had evidently been used by the marauders as their living quarters while they stripped the ship; and to put it shortly, the habits and customs of the Eskimos were not altogether pleasant to the white man.

"'Ere," gasped Wilfred, hastily, "I 'ave 'ad enough of this! There ain't no sanitary inspectors up 'ere in the Harctic."

We returned hurriedly to the deck again, and the full sense of our desolate surroundings struck us anew. At all times a helpless

wreck is a mournful sight, but when it is backed up by a snow-clad, uninhabited island, surrounded by a lonely Arctic sea, the scene becomes impressive in its savage dreariness. Nature untouched by man can be overwhelming to the puny biped, even to the biped who goes forth upon the seven seas, and here about us nature was very much untouched.

We climbed down into the cold and echoing engine room, and beheld a sight that would have moved any engineer worthy of the name to tears.

The engines had not received so much hurt as they might have done, yet they lay in a woe-ful heap, begrimed with rust and dirt; and we were nearly driven out by a flock of sea birds that had entered into possession through the broken skylight, and now rose screaming at our entry, pounding the air with their heavy muscular wings. A number of pictures from illustrated papers and magazines were tacked and pasted up. "The Eskimos evidently could not get the hang of these," said I.

"No, and they usually like picters. 'Ullo, 'ere's a fortograph of the chief's best girl!"

"Here's a newspaper cutting," said I, "pasted up, and torn at the bottom."

"'Awks missed that. Read it," said Wilfred, peering over my shoulder.

"'The S. S. *Fanchoo*, belonging to Messrs. Ensign and Flagg of this port —'"

"Wot port?" interrupted Wilfred, and then read at the top of the cutting, "'Ong Kong *Daily Post*,' and a year old, too. Go on; this 'ere's evidence, this is."

"'Of this port,'" I continued, "'reports having sighted the Japanese gunboat *Amasuki*, making for Nagasaki for repairs, having grazed a reef while in chase of a notorious pearl poacher which is believed to be the steam sealer (here the name was scratched out) of San Francisco, U. S. A.'"

"Sealskins!" cackled Wilfred. "O my grandmother! And 'Awks says as 'ow 'e's arfter sealskins!" Then he added, "And I'd give five quid to know who it was that

scretched that ship's nyme orf that piece of newspaper, I would."

"So would I, Wilfred," I answered. "In fact, I'd give a month's pay to know who and why."

"Was it 'Awks larst night?"

"He would quite certainly have taken the whole thing down."

"Yes, I s'pose 'e would. Since it is there, it looks as though 'e 'ad n't even seen it. Funny! This gets me. Well, whoever it was 'ad a powerful interest in the ship wot was chased by the Japs. And that being so, 'e was a fool to pyste it up. No, I'm beginning to think it *was* 'Awks that scretched that ship's nyme out. Then he dirtied it over-like with 'is thumb. Now wot is the *Twin Brothers* doing up 'ere in the Harctic? Tell me that."

"Protheroe came here to lose his ship?" I suggested.

"And 'is crew, too, if possible. Dead men 'ave an 'abit of sticking to the business of being dead and telling no little yarns. By all ac-

counts, old Protheroe was not above a little murdering, quiet-like. Bad man, that!"

"We are jumping at conclusions," said I.

"Yes, I do n't think!" said the little man, eyeing me steadily. "Sealskins!" He laughed. "Oh, you and 'Awks is a pair!"

"Do n't mix me up with it," I said, eyeing him back as steadily.

"That straight, Grummet?"

"It is straight — you know me, Wilfred."

"Cert'nly I do know you, Grummet. Well, well! And 'Awks, 'ow about 'im?"

"Ah, I do n't know. Did he know?"

"Of course 'e did! 'Awks ain't up 'ere collecting eggs! You will recollect my wondering at 'im buying a wreck and a cargo of sealskins. To buy such, sitooated as these 'ere alleged sealskins was to be, is a mug's game, and not 'Awks's!"

"What about his temper last night?"

"'Cos 'e could n't find 'is pearls."

"What about all the diving gear they must have carried? I see no sign of it."

"Gone with the rest of 'er fixin's, of course. Where 's your bloomin' 'ead, Grummet?"

"This may put you and me in an awkward fix, Wilfred," said I.

"That is the only thing that makes me wonder if 'Awks really did think 'e was buying sealskins, and not a pile of poached pearls."

"I do n't know, but stolen property is a nasty thing to have anything to do with."

"Oh, yes, it's all that. It's no sort of a gyme for me — playing fence, receiving stolen goods — too dirty for me." He scratched his head thoughtfully, and said slowly to himself:

"Protheroe 'ad evidently been poaching pearls from the Japs. 'E did it so smart that for a long time they could n't catch 'im. Very well, then. 'By an' by the Japs got sick of burning coal and straining their boiler tubes arfter this unknown ship from Frisco, and so really lays themselves out to catch 'im. Very well, then. Protheroe, 'aving meanwhile made

'is little pile, and seeing as 'ow things was getting rather 'ot, slings 'is 'ook, clears out, and — O myl" gasped the little man, with a sudden bound. "*Now I sees it!*"

Wilfred began emphasizing his remarks by hitting the palm of one hand with his fist.

"We got it so far. Protheroe, 'aving made 'is pile, clears out. 'E's got 'is pile with 'im. Now 'e has also got 'is crew and mates, and they know all about it. So Protheroe thinks, 'Oh, I'll take a run into the Harctic somewhere quiet and out of the way, not too far from civilization, and wreck my ship.' P'raps 'is mates were in with 'im, p'raps not. Anyway, d'you suppose a man that was a millionaire through poached pearls would like 'aving a ship's crowd know all about it? No, cert'nly not! 'E 'ad some dirty little scheme for doing away with 'is ship first, and 'is crew and mates harfterwards. But, instead, 'e, Protheroe, gets done, and someone else 'as got 'is pearls."

"But he would n't choose a place like this,

thousands of miles away from nowhere, to lose his ship."

"No, 'e was making for the 'arbor there for water, or repairs, or wot not, and wrecked 'is bloomin' sardine tin afore 'e meant."

CHAPTER V

AS the tide was rising and the sea heavy, Wilfred and I did not dare to stay overlong on the wreck. It is true that she had been there, undisturbed, for many months, but, considering our lonely surroundings, we took no chances. The wind howled and whistled shrilly, and the crashing surf threw up sheets of spray that, driven horizontally, pattered upon the ringing iron decks like hail.

We examined the hull, which, as far as we could see, had received no irreparable damage — a fact truly wonderful in the circumstances. But then, as Wilfred pointed out, her people may have had just a few moments' notice before she actually took the rocks, and she had therefore struck with her engines going full speed astern, and thus mitigated the blow.

The sea to northward was dotted with icebergs, and the wind, coming from that quarter, cut like a knife. It was the coldest cold I had ever felt, and it seemed to wither us to the bone. But those mountains of ice were grand to look at, as they twinkled and shone, moving sedately southward with a school of whale spouting and romping past them.

"My 'at," gasped Wilfred, clutching at the battered yachting cap he wore, which in that region and circumstances seemed almost as unsuitable as a fireman's helmet, "what a blooming place this is! 'Ere, 'old 'ard, I'm getting blown away!"

We rested a moment in the lee of a large rock, and in a moment or two the little Englishman had recovered, and struck up

We been down to Gryvesent,
We been down to Gryvesent,
We been down to Gry-y-vesent,
And we've 'ad a 'appy day.

"Come on," said I. "Save your breath."

"All right, old sport," he answered genially. "Don't you pull such a long face over heverythink. If you can't be cheerful, be as cheerful as you can. It 'elps a lot, it does!"

"You're right," answered I, feeling admonished; and so we made our way back to the ship.

To my mind, it seemed rather a mad idea to try to save the wreck, placed as we were so far from assistance, without the power that is laid on like gas in any dockyard or salvage steamer. But Mr. Hawks thought differently, and as he was very much of a commander, I merely gave my opinion, since he asked for it, and then stood by for further orders.

He listened to all I had to say with interest and attention and a wholly expressionless face, but as he had already made out his calculation that there would be another abnormal tide in six weeks, he decided to wait and try to float the wreck. And meanwhile he would patch her up as well as he could.

Then I mentioned the newspaper cutting, and while I was watching him intently, I discovered that he was watching me. It was a curious shock.

He had turned away to his papers, so that I could study only a quarter of his face, and then I found that he was gazing keen-eyed at me in the cabin mirror!


"That 's interesting, Grummet," was all he said, so I made no further remark upon the circumstance.

We turned all hands to work upon the wreck at once, and it was a job they did not like. At no time is iron easy to work with, but with only hand forges, hand tackles, and in an arctic climate, we had a good crop of smashed fingers, sprained wrists, and jammed feet. We had four forges with us, and it took us a day to transship these, with enough coal and tools, out to the wreck from the schooner. And as the sea chanced to be rough, every man was drenched in icy sea water for most of the day.

Owing to the fact that the voyage had taken longer than had been expected, and to the fact that we were delaying our return to civilization for another six weeks, Mr. Hawks decided that the regal and luxurious allowances of food that had been dealt out to the men must, perforce, be cut down a little in quantity. This added greatly to the general dissatisfaction of the men, and it did not take me long to see that the cattleman was "working things up," and that before long some sort of crisis would be at hand.

Orders were not carried out promptly, men would tarry over the smallest and most simple jobs, and we had nothing but black looks from all — except young Green, who was in a difficult position. He was one of the crew, yet known to be our friend, as well as being altogether superior to his mates.

Fortunately for him, he was, as I have said, of a "husky" build. He was a heavyweight and a football player, and he had had several months of sea life to harden him into good



condition, and I have no doubt that he was handy with his fists.

Yet, after all, he was only one among many, and the cattleman was as hard as he, and infinitely more experienced. They were a hard, brutal, savage set of men, and a man would get no vestige of fair play among them. So I kept my eye lifted for young Green's safety, although by no word or act did he ask for my assistance.

It was Wilfred who first drew my attention to Green's position. For some reason it had not struck me till the Londoner pointed it out.

"'E's only a kid reely, in spite of 'is size, an' that little lot for'ard are a rude lot."

Meanwhile the work upon the wreck went on, and everywhere there were scowls and mutterings. Twice a bucket of hot tar was dropped from a height "by accident" very near my head. So the next time a hammer, which had also been dropped "by accident," came humming past my head, I saw that it was time to offer an ultimatum.

I was alone at the wreck at the time, a mile and a half from assistance, and as there were seven men to deal with, I decided that half measures would not do.

It was the negro who had dropped the hammer, so I called him down; and he came, looking very ugly indeed. I told him, and the rest too, that if any more things were dropped, either on purpose or by accident, I would shoot the man who dropped them through the hand. Most of them knew how painful a form of punishment that is, so no more things were dropped.

Wilfred gloried in the situation, and was full of prophecies of trouble, which he made in the most cheerful manner. And he rather aggravated matters by forbidding any of the embryo mutineers to enter his galley on pain of receiving full in the face the contents of the hottest pot that happened to be on the stove. So it was always young Green who came aft for the crew's meals, and through this channel we received a good deal of information. All

this was served to us with our dinner, embellished by Wilfred, who assumed the position of intermediary with the greatest gusto.

I could always tell from the little man's expression if he had something of great import to tell us, and his intense enjoyment of the situation caused Mr. Hawks and myself much amusement. In this way we were told of innumerable plans, each more horrible than the one before, whereby the crew was going to murder us and take command. Some details I know were added by Wilfred, as none of the crew was intelligent enough to invent them.

"That little man would have made his fortune as a novelist," said Mr. Hawks, one day, as we were laughing over Wilfred's keen delight in the precarious situation.

Then there came an interruption to our labors, an interruption that was as welcome to the crew as to us.

Mr. Hawks was always hankering after whaling ever since, two years before, he had accompanied a whaling ship. So upon this

voyage he had brought with him a whaling boat and gear. And although I had never really supposed that he would use them, the voyage had turned out so badly that one or perhaps two "kills" would be very welcome financially.

But whaling is an art; it is for experts only, and, above all, it is the most dangerous sport in the world. In fact, it is danger with a little sport mixed in. Hunting big game in the wilds of Africa is but child's play compared with it.

The difficulties were many and grave. No one except Mr. Hawks had ever had any experience, and he but little. The project was as thoroughly mad as most of his projects were, but it was their very madness that bound "Cert'nly" Wilfred and my humble self to him.

There was no one except myself to take the all-important position of boat steerer, and although I had been used to handling small boats in the treacherous waters of the Thames

estuary, whaling is so different from all else that I looked forward with dread to my responsibilities. Still, there was nothing for it. Mr. Hawks would go a-whalin'. so a-whaling he must go!

We got a trying-out apparatus ready, and strange it looked to me to see a sort of pigpen built of brick upon our decks. We arranged lookout signals from the wreck, and when, one day, a man who was working upon the winch in the stern raised the long-drawn yell of "Tha-a-ar she spouts, spouts — spouts!" everyone threw down his tools and fell headlong into the boat.

We rowed madly for the schooner, which was riding with her anchor hove short and the whale boat ready for instant launching. Every man was as keen as mustard, any diversion from the tedious task upon the wreck would have been welcome, and the anchor came up in record time. In ten minutes the schooner, under her engine, was standing out of the harbor for all the world like the fire

patrol in answer to a call. The lookout man danced and yelled with excitement, pointing in a northwesterly direction, and Mr. Hawks shot up the foremast with his glasses in his teeth.

The wreck, the prevailing unpleasantness, everything was forgotten, and each man jabbered with excitement and animation. Mr. Hawks called a council of war, and much to Peter Scott's disappointment, he was told to take charge of the ship during the commander's absence, as I was to accompany the whaling party as boat steerer. Young Green, the negro, the cattleman, and one of the Germans were called aft, and told to prepare themselves for the boat, or, in other words, given time to pile on as many clothes as they conveniently could, for the weather was biting cold, and the end of the boat expedition uncertain.

The leviathans were still a long way off, but we could see their steam-like spouts. They were approaching at an angle. Their progress was grand; nothing seemed to daunt them in

the least, and I had several misgivings as to the wisdom of our plans.

The afternoon was bright and clear and very cold, and ice fringed the northern horizon. At a point that would lay the ship some distance from the whale, Mr. Hawks ordered a sharp:

“Up with your helm!”

The whale boat ran squealing to the water, and the boat crew threw themselves down with reckless disregard for their necks. I followed into the stern, and at the same time Mr. Hawks arrived in the bows, and just as we pushed off from the ship's side, a warning yell came from above.

I looked up, and the next moment was knocked flat by a flying mass, which proved to be “Cert'nly” Wilfred.

Mr. Hawks turned, looked angry, but we were already some little distance out from the ship. Wilfred picked himself up with a bleeding nose, and remarked cheerfully:

“Did n't know you was that 'ard, Grum-


met. I'd as soon 'it a concrete pyvement, I would, reely!"

Then silence descended upon us.

Gradually, as we and the whale approached, meeting at an angle, Mr. Hawks picked out his "kill," and we waited in breathless suspense. Then Mr. Hawks stood up, harpoon in hand, and I think that even he was trembling with excitement. For I must again point out that we were not whalers of any sort.

As the whale Mr. Hawks had picked out grew near, it began to look as big as an ocean liner, and the commotion it caused in the water by its easy progress was more than a little alarming to our unaccustomed eyes.

Then — and it was more by good chance than by skill — the harpoon that Mr. Hawks launched with every ounce of power he had, went home into the whale's gigantic side, and traveled deep into the huge, shining, wet mass. The crew, a bit green about the gills, turned about to lay on to the line, and the next second we were in appalling commotion!



To experienced whalers it would have been all in the day's work; to us it seemed the end, or very near it.

Off went the whale and we behind it, quicker than any motor boat that was ever built. It was sudden, violent, exciting.

It was quite in accord with the law of chance that we, the unaccustomed, the unpractised, the unskilled, should happen upon what is technically known as a "nor'wester," or, in other words, a particularly vicious specimen, that seemed in no way disposed to give us the least chance of killing him, but was quite determined to kill us instead.

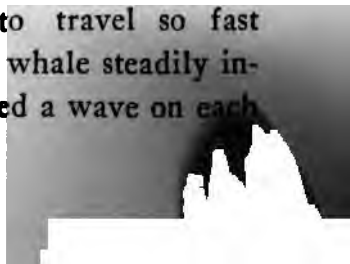
I remember that it struck me at the time, even in that mad whirl, that we were the aggressors, and that the whale was proceeding quietly on his business when we thrust an inexperienced finger into the machinery of our joint destiny. I say joint destiny, because we were now traveling at eighteen or twenty miles an hour through the water, more or less in charge of the whale we had come to kill.

We were being rushed directly into the eye of the wind, and it was quite impossible to haul nearer and use lance or gun; so for a time all we could do was to hang on. We traveled in a smother of foam, soaked to the skin, and my heart was somewhere near my mouth. My duties were arduous, and I was soon as wet with sweat as with sea water, while Wilfred, crowing gleefully with excitement, hopped about at my side.

Mr. Hawks stood in the bows, a big, powerful man — but a puny, fragile little animal compared to the whale — ready and watchful. The men sat low to steady the boat, and braced against the line. I stood up in the stern, my long oar in hand, and Wilfred, with his nose bleeding afresh, bailed and coughed and whooped with delight.

No one gave a thought to the ship that we were leaving far behind.

It was extraordinary to travel so fast through the water, for the whale steadily increased his pace. We raised a wave on each



side that grew higher and higher, and roared in our ears as with screwed-up faces we peered ahead into the driving wind and spray.

Still the whale traveled on, a demon of power and energy. Then he changed his course and dragged us through the seas at an angle. We let him have some line — the pace was so terrific — but still we continued. How long this went on I have no notion; I was far too engrossed in steering to measure time, for a mistake on my part would probably have meant the drowning of most of us. Then, after a period, I chose a second to glance astern.

The ship was hull down upon the horizon!

That was one of the biggest shocks of my life. I had not the slightest idea that we had traveled so far or so long, and I thought hard for some moments. The schooner would be following us at her best speed, but compared to us she was almost a stationary object upon the rim of the world, while we were flying

like a train toward Asia. Peter Scott would take accurate bearings of our final disappearance, but who was to say how the whale might alter his course? I shouted to Mr. Hawks, but at first he could not hear. Then Wilfred, placing two fingers in his mouth, produced a whistle that was fairly head-splitting in intensity.

Mr. Hawks turned his head, and Wilfred pointed to the speck upon the far horizon. I saw his lips move, and he looked a thoroughly worried man.

On we went, mile after mile, and standing there in the stern, I again reviewed our situation. We were in a desperately lonely part of the world, and the temperature was not one for cruising in an open boat. We had with us a beaker of water and food for a few days, but it would be doubtful if many of us could live long unsheltered in such a climate. The chances of being picked up by some other ship were so remote as to be out of consideration, and with no instruments except a boat compass

it would be quite impossible to reach the island again.

Then suddenly the whale slowed down, and sounded, to sulk and think.

"Do n't you think we have gone far enough, sir?" I called. It was the first time during many years that I ever offered a suggestion to Mr. Hawks.

"I hate to cut from a whale," he answered. "I know I could muckle him if he would give me a chance."

He looked about him, hesitating and uncertain. Then swiftly he ran his eye round the horizon, and with a single stroke of the axe he cut the line! He had seen, creeping up from the south and east, a heavy white blanket of impenetrable arctic mist!

CHAPTER VI

OUT with that boat compass!" said Mr. Hawks, slamming down the axe. "Take a bearing of where you last saw the ship, quick now!"

Before I had time to haul in my long steering oar, Wilfred had the neat mahogany box out of the stern locker.

"Sou'east-'nd-b'-east-an'-'arf-east it is, sir."

"Round she comes," said Mr. Hawks. "Step that mast and sail."

Before we had covered a quarter of a mile of that cold, deep blue, lonely sea the fog was upon us. And it was cold, piercingly cold, cold and wet. The sudden change from exhilarating excitement, and from the warmth of violent action, was deadening to the spirit, and upon the face of each man was written large the peril we were in — of each man except Wilfred, who seemed quite unaltered.

The oars were ordered outboard, and for a full hour the men toiled, while the fog thickened till we could barely see the length of the boat. Then, as if to render our isolation more complete, darkness settled down, and the gloom that shut us in was almost tangible.

"Spell-o!" ordered Mr. Hawks, and the men rested gratefully.

The sudden silence seemed unnatural. The heavy breathing of the men, the rippling of the water beneath the boat as we mounted or descended the long swell, the slatting of the halyard against the mast, and the rattle of a tin dipper in the stern locker were the only sounds. Then Mr. Hawks struck a match. It was as dazzling as a light suddenly struck in a dark room, and we all gazed with interest at its unexpected and cheerful brightness.

"Ahead!" ordered Mr. Hawks, shortly, and in silence the men resumed their oars.

Suddenly there came the thud of a gun.


"'Ooray!" squealed Wilfred. "There is 'ome and mother!"

We waited, totally unable to decide from which direction the sound had come, so baffling is a thick fog at sea. In about ten minutes the dull, heavy thud came again, and it seemed to be abeam to northward. We turned in that direction, again vigorously plied our oars, and made all the speed we could. But steering with any degree of accuracy was impossible; and when, after a lapse of time, we again heard the gun, it sounded astern, and the head of the boat was again turned.

As a matter of course, a few such traverses completely bewildered us, especially when, instead of the sound seeming nearer, it appeared to be receding at each repetition.

"Oh! Peak your oars!" was Mr. Hawks' next order. "We have been flying around like a spun button, and we do n't gain any on that gun. Judging by that last report, it can't be more than three miles off. We'll wait for daylight."

He had estimated our distance from the ship, when cutting from the whale, to be fully



eleven or twelve miles. With no true magnetic bearings, and nothing to guide the eye, a ship on a waste of waters is a small object to steer for. The slightest deflection from the true course would, in that distance, carry us entirely wide of the mark; and the sound at sea in such circumstances of fog and darkness is puzzling to the most practiced ear.

Giving up all hope of reaching the ship that night, we made ourselves as comfortable as we could, and no one suggested food. We might need all we had and more besides before long, so we stretched out across the thwarts and tried to sleep. Mr. Hawks alone remained wide-awake, intent and listening. I had with me a huge blanket coat, which I put on; and then, despite his very personal remarks about my girth, I buttoned up "Cert'nly" Wilfred against me, for the night was bitterly cold. In this way, although it was rather a squeeze, I kept the little man warm and dry, for he was hardly bigger than a child.

"This is what you might call a night hout, Grummet," he said. He employed his time by searching my pockets and remarking upon their contents, and then struck up:

We won't go 'ome till morning.

No one slept much; the night was too cold and damp, the situation too precarious; and we were up and down by fits and starts, the boat being allowed to drift at will. Luckily, the night was short, and daylight found us astir, and impatient to be doing.

I was secretly amused to note that there was no sign of mutiny, even in the cattleman. He obeyed all orders with the promptitude of a man-o'-war's man, for he was quick enough to see that our safety lay with the best man among us—who was, without doubt, Mr. Hawks.

Breakfast was served sparingly to those who cared to eat it, and while we were thus engaged, a light air sprang up from the west. It seemed a favourable omen, so we set sail

to take advantage of it, and gradually the fog was blown to ribbons. Then, with a sudden burst, the round, copper-coloured sun came through, and every remnant of mist departed. Each man eagerly strained his eyes to sweep the horizon round us.

Nothing but sea and sky was to be seen!

Mr. Hawks glanced across at me and nodded slightly, and I, as slightly, nodded back. His nod meant, "We are up against it," and mine meant, "Yes, we are."

The cattleman looked fierce and ugly; young Green kept an immovable face, but there was a touch of tragedy in his young eyes. The negro was stiff with cold and crushed in spirits, almost lethargic with despair; and the German mumbled in his native tongue.

"Life on the briny deep!" said Wilfred.

To move at all seemed useless, for we might be moving away from the ship, and to reach any land was out of the question. We were very much alone upon a waste of ocean; and to make matters worse, the freshening wind

that had cleared away the fog was gradually but steadily increasing — and we all knew how quick a gale can spring up in those latitudes. We hoisted a rag of sail to keep the head of the boat to the seas, but I remember thinking at the time that the precaution was rather ridiculous.

The horizon now kept clear, but hour after hour went by, and no sail or other object broke the level line separating sea and sky in a circle round us. Mr. Hawks stood up, steadying himself to command the largest possible range of vision. He looked a fine, strong figure, watchful and grave. Suddenly he shaded his eyes. "See anything floating on the port bow, Grummet?" he asked, quietly.

I stood up, but every other man sat peering with interest.

"It's a drog, sir!" I cried. Then to young Green, "Draw that jib, quick now!"

I brought the boat round with a sweep of the oar, and Mr. Hawks leaned over the bows. A moment more, and he and the negro were

straining and lifting. To their surprise, they found it difficult.

"There's a line fast to it," suddenly shouted Mr. Hawks, "and a sunk whale, as well! Underrun the line, and bring it to the chocks. Furl that sail."

In a few moments we had gathered in the stray line, and were riding short, up and down, anchored, as it were, to a sunken whale. We "veered and hauled" to ease the strain, while another piece of line was bent, as low as possible, for a "preventor." Then every precaution was taken against chafing.

"Well, this gets me," said Mr. Hawks, softly. "We can ride here, head to sea, for it's going to blow, and we'll have it high enough before tomorrow."

"Is there any ship's name on the drog, sir?" I asked.

Mr. Hawks turned it over. "There is, but I can't read it; it's in Russian."

As the day wore on, depression and cold sank into us. Our chances of rescue were

small, so small that I made up my mind that death was the only possible end. We ate our supper, if such it could be called, while the wind steadily increased, and with it the sea. The angry, steep waves tossed us about unmercifully, and now and again came in over the bows and started us bailing.

We hung to our strange anchor, while night descended with no abatement of the storm, and with no object in sight save the cold, snarling sea. Then came a sudden shout from Mr. Hawks in the bows. He was hoarse and cold, so I hardly recognized his voice.

"Our line's slacked up!" he cried through the gloom. "We are drifting to leeward! The line's parted, or we have drawn the iron!"

Then, after a moment, he shouted, "That dead whale's coming up! There he is!"

Each man rose with a different exclamation as an immense mass loomed glittering and wet in the semi-darkness, and rising to nearly half its huge bulk above the surface of the water,

lay like a small island to windward of us. It was the most astonishing and unexpected thing I ever saw, and the German cried with fear.

"My 'at!" gasped Wilfred. "Oh, my 'at! Didyerever!"

There came a terrific snapping as the confined gas generated in the huge dead carcass burst through the lance holes; and then a most appalling stench of putrefaction swept down upon us.

"Oh! Buttercups and dysies! See the pretty flowers!" gurgled Wilfred, covering his nose with his cap.


But the sea we floated in was almost calm.

It was, when we came to think of it, the most ordinary thing in the world. The whale had been mortally wounded by the whalers from some Russian ship, but in his death agony he either smashed the boat or got away with the line, iron, and drog. Then the whale had sounded and died, and for days the process of decomposition had been going on, until

the buoyant power of the pent-up gas was sufficient to overcome the weight of the whale, and had made it rise to the surface of the water. But its manner of coming, suddenly like a volcanic island, was startling, and so was the almost throttling stench that it brought with it.

We drew in the line, and were suddenly in dead-calm water, for not only was that huge mass shielding us from wind and seas, but it was poring forth a steady stream of oil! This change in our affairs came with such a sudden relief that, in spite of the stench, we all, including Mr. Hawks, dropped into a fitful sleep, the sleep of overstrain and exposure.

Though the sun practically never sank behind the horizon during the short summer months of that region, the leaden sky, full charged with snow, brought about a gloom that was terribly depressing to the spirits. From my position in the stern, I could look along the boat, upon the huddled figures of my companions, then on again, along the line



to the great island-like body of the dead whale. Upon the weather side of this vast, wet, shining mass, the seas broke in a smother of foam and frequently drenched us with spray. Time passed, and the air cleared of fog and became unusually clear, with a biting wind and occasional hurrying snowflakes. A blizzard was not far off, and little enough of that would finish us, exposed as we were to every wind that blew, wet and without food.

Wilfred became restless, and finally disengaged himself from the folds of my coat, sat up, and looked about him. After rolling a cigarette, he stooped and lit it in shelter, then, drawing contentedly upon the tobacco, he again sat up and continued his survey of things in general. Suddenly his eyes paused in their sweep of the horizon, and stared steadily in one direction. I turned at once to look also.

"'Ere," said he, "there's that other island, ain't it?" and he pointed with a thin finger to the southwest.

Occasionally, as the seas permitted, I caught a glimpse of a darker mass upon the horizon, with patches of snow. I roused Mr. Hawks.

"That 's it; I guess we 'll be getting there," was his only comment.

The men stirred unwillingly, half stupid with cold, weariness, and acute discomfort.

"Tumble up!" said I, angrily. "D' you want to freeze to death?"

With numb, unfeeling hands they stepped the mast and hoisted the sail that rose flapping violently in the breeze; then the line to the whale was cast off, and we rocked away upon a southwesterly course, once more buffeted by the seas. It seemed a weary business.

"Good-bye, Chorley," called Wilfred to the dead whale, and one or two men grinned slightly and shook a little more life into their limbs — a cheerful note has a wonderful effect — and Mr. Hawks eyed Wilfred as the little man turned with an energetic movement and faced the future, remarking, "Now, what next, I wonder?"

Had any one been there to see, he would have observed a fine exhibition of open-boat sailing in rough sea. The island we were making for stretched out long and low upon the horizon, a contrast in every way to the island where we had been at anchor for so long. A range of hills, some way inland, was covered with snow, but for the most part the land lay in low undulations. The sky became blacker, and the light more gloomy, the sea colder and darker in appearance, the scene, if possible, more bleak and terrible. It was almost as though one could smell the approaching blizzard, and a suspicious clearness cut everything with a sharp edge.

Mr. Hawks stood in the stern steering, while I handled the sheet, and the negro and the cattleman bailed the sea back to where it belonged. Young Green pounded himself to keep warm, and the German seemed sunk in despair.

"Cheer up, Dutchy!" said Wilfred. "We are goin' ter land on a lovely tropic hisland,

wiv bananas growin' on the trees, an' all things bright and beautiful."


The little man was cheerful and perfectly at his ease. He regarded all things like an interested spectator who looks on from a safe distance. His safety lay in the fact that he was not in the least afraid of dying, nor perplexed by the thought of death. Meanwhile, being alive, most things interested him—hence his cheerfulness. It was an enviable and unassailable position to occupy.

"Is that smoke?" exclaimed Mr. Hawks, suddenly, pointing towards the island.

I took the glasses from the stern lockers and leveled them ahead. There appeared some indentation in the low-lying coast that might have been a small river mouth, and a mile or so inland a column of white ascended.

"It must be smoke, sir," said I, thoroughly puzzled.

Every man in the boat was staring ahead in silence, and Mr. Hawks took the glasses and looked.



"Somebody there ahead of us, I guess," he remarked.

"We'll 'ave company," said Wilfred, "company to 'elp us w'ile away the long summer evenings," and a snowflake settled on his nose. "G' way," said he.

On we went at a fine pace, the wind astern, swinging us giddily over the seas towards the land. We could now make out the surf running heavily along the shores, and we aimed straight for that river mouth. But as we grew nearer, we marveled greatly at that white column, for the nearer we came the higher and greater in volume did it appear. Then Mr. Hawks guessed its nature.


"Hot springs," said he laconically.

"Good! We'll 'ave a barth," said Wilfred.

The wandering snowflakes increased in number, but we were all far too much taken up in regarding the island. We did not mention the ship, or the coming winter, or our lack of provisions, but we all, in our different ways, considered the precarious future. I felt

sure that Peter Scott would look for us until he found us, and was almost certain to examine this island in the course of his search, but how long it might be before he arrived there was no saying. It might be weeks; and we were not prepared for too long a sojourn upon an arctic island.

A considerable tide rip appeared to disturb the water at the river mouth, and frothed and roared about us as we sailed through it. In a few minutes after, we had land on either side of us, and the swell of the sea lessened. With a curling wave streaming out from the bows, and the wind dead aft, we, ragged and gaunt and cold and hungry, looked savagely upon that almost bare, inhospitable shore and regarded it as a haven of refuge. To men in an open boat the sea can be horrible, and the horror of it was upon us all, more or less. It mattered not, for the moment, that the island might contain no vestige of life to sustain life; it did not concern us that in all probability the island remained unsighted by the eyes of



men for years together; to us it presented shelter and temporary security out of reach of that heaving, treacherous Arctic Ocean. Moreover, there was room to move about, plenty of it; we would not be jammed up against each other to die elbow to elbow. And a handful of strong men take a lot of killing.

But that island was an island of surprises, as we were shortly to find out!

CHAPTER VII

THE boat swept on, the land closing in about us, that white column of steam seeming little nearer. It appeared a magnet; I think it was the warmth it suggested to our cold, cramped bodies. The low-lying shores continued to narrow in about us, the banks of the estuary but ten or twelve feet high, with coarse grass blowing in the wind on top. Occasionally patches of old ice remained grounded, or jammed in the corners along the shore that soon began to lose its appearance of sea beach and suggest the banks of a tidal river.

I remember thinking at that time that the scene was rather grand in its utter forlornness, the island so forbidding and remote offering shelter and but little else to a gang of sore pressed sailormen as tough and forbidding in appearance as the island. Hardships alter

men in a very short time, and we were none of us over-civilized or city-bred to begin with. So I think we must have looked a hard set of human specimens, perched handily about that raking whale boat that swept foaming through the waters beneath the patched and weather-stained bellying canvas. Pirates we looked, and already down at that bed-rock level of hunger that calls upon the primitive man to raise himself and throw aside the garment of civilization. If some magician's wand could have suddenly transformed us to the cruising ground of an eastern yacht club, we would, I think, have caused some disturbance by our very appearance.

In this condition did we descend upon that island, glaring hungrily about us. A bend in the river opening out before us revealed a large marshy tract with the column of steam rising from a little way up the further shore. As we swept into this shallow lake, now wheeling to the breeze upon our quarter, there arose, with prodigious noise, a great flock of geese,

and from us a great shout of joy. It was immensely surprising both to the geese and ourselves, for we were amongst them almost before they knew it, and before some of them had time to rise from the water. With a lithe, savage grab the negro caught a bird round the neck in each hand, and drew them into the boat, the lust of chicken-stealing ancestry glowing in his eyes. Wilfred yelled and coughed and yelled, cackling with laughter as he held on to another, and would have gone over the side, the goose proving considerably the stronger, had not Mr. Hawks, grinning broadly, jerked both back into the boat. The cattleman had snatched a fourth, and pandemonium reigned, while about us and above us the remainder of the flock filled the air with screams of warning and beat lustily with their powerful wings.

"Oh, what a dye we are 'avin'!" yelled Wilfred, still smothered in violently protesting goose, "didyerever!"

The arctic lagoon we were sailing across



was a strange contrast to the sea. For so long the sea had played a leading part in our lives that to be surrounded by land was a novel experience. The lake was very shallow, and Mr. Hawks, continuing his course for that column of steam upon the other shore, was forced to thread his way between numerous marshy islands that were each the private domain of a brace of geese. We had plunged into a nesting ground, and upon all sides for miles the cry of warning went, was echoed and repeated amid that concourse of birds, that strange and powerful animals had arrived, and were bringing swift destruction upon the feathered populace.

Grounding the boat upon the shore, we sprang out, delighted at the solid feel of the old earth beneath our feet, and with one accord made up the hill towards the hot spring, which we now began to realize was a much larger affair than we had thought. On the way we collected moss and lichens to make a fire of. We carried the mast and sail, intend-

ing to make a tent with it somewhere in the neighborhood of the spring, and perhaps benefit by its warmth, and so all-conquering an animal is man that we marched ahead without misgiving until a great subterranean rumbling brought us all to a standstill. A series of loud explosions followed, and then a jet of boiling water shot up a good hundred feet into the air, with a terrific rending hiss of steam. It was an amazing sight in that surrounding, and for a moment none of us spoke, but all just stood and gaped.

"Say!" remarked Mr. Hawks. "I guess we'd better go carefully."

We proceeded a few yards further as the fountain died down again, leaving the same great column of vapour increased by the steam from half an acre of boiling water that ran off in numerous streams that, cooling gradually, arrived eventually at the lagoon, not much above freezing point.

"'Ere!" gasped Wilfred, shrill with surprise. "The bloomin' ground's 'ot!"

With terrified gesture, the negro and the German turned about and fled, while Mr. Hawks, Wilfred, young Green, the cattleman, and myself all went down upon our hands and knees.

Yes, the ground was warm.

Wilfred wheeled about and sat down upon the red gravelly soil.

"Thet's fine!" said he. "Thet's a little bit of all right, thet is!"

Without a word, we followed suit, and there we sat, grinning at one another and basking in the luxury of warmth, and odd we must have appeared, while the negro and the German looked on from afar with profound misgivings.

"Ground-floor flat," piped Wilfred, "steam 'eated with a puffict view of the gas works! Oh, are n't we pampered!"

We got to our feet again, and, keeping our eyes about us, we advanced. Steam was coming up in thin spirals from the earth itself, and we came upon a marsh — of hot water.

"I ain't goin' no further," said the cattleman, suddenly. "It ain't safe; besides, when we going to have them geese?"

"Always thinkin' of your stumic," said Wilfred, pickin' his way carefully. "Well, I'm goin' on. I want ter see 'ow this 'ere founting works, I do; so you can wait till I come back, or cook the bloomin' geese y'self."

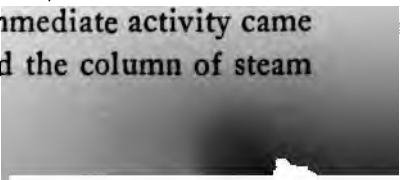
The cattleman looked surly, continued a pace or two, then turned about.

"Very well," said he, over his shoulder, "and a lot you 'll get to eat when you come back!"

"Pore feller!" said Wilfred. "'Is nerves is upset."

Under ordinary circumstances such a reply as the cattleman's would have meant "trouble," but I think we were all too much interested in the geyser, for on we went, treading lightly, like cats upon a wet pavement, Mr. Hawks, Wilfred, young Green, and I.

No further sign of immediate activity came from the geyser, beyond the column of steam




that we could now hear roaring most impressively. It seemed to spout from the centre of an immense basin, and where it emerged it formed a pillar sixteen feet thick, spreading out as it rose into a great cloud above. We came upon cauldrons of boiling mud, simmering away and emitting steam and strong smells of sulphur. Some were just gently cooking — “the way to boil an 'am,” as Wilfred put it; and others, more active, spluttered furiously, remaining quiescent for about half a minute, then bubbling away again. The whole hillside was an escape pipe from below, and hungry and tired and worn out though we were, curiosity and interest forced us to continue, our bodily condition forgotten in the desire to know “why”: the way of the white man the wide world over.

Having noted carefully which way the boiling water fell when it spouted from the geyser, we approached, ready to turn about and run if there was the slightest hint of a rumbling from below. But, except for the boiling caul-

drons of mud, the thin spirals of steam that filtered through cracks in the earth, all appeared safe, for the jet of steam from the geyser was steadily decreasing in volume. By this time we had arrived at the rim of the gigantic basin, from the centre of which the geyser sprang very little steam was rising, and this without any force, but more as though from a bucket of hot water. Nor was there any water in the basin itself, which was about fifty feet in diameter and appeared to be made of some hard deposit almost as smooth as ordinary earthenware. As the place from which the geyser came was in the exact centre, the whole resembled in every way a Brobdingnagian wash-hand basin, with outlet pipe all complete.

While we stood regarding this extraordinary, and apparently useless, labor of Nature's, Wilfred threw one leg over the basin rim and started to climb in.

"Mind what you are about!" barked Mr. Hawks, in a startled voice.



"All right, all right!" answered the little man testily. "I wants ter see down that theer drain." And, after a moment's indecision, we followed, for we were all itching to look down that "drain."

Joining hands for fear one of us would slip, and go sliding down into the mouth of the hole, we approached, treading with care upon the smooth, glassy surface. By the edge we lay and looked over, and none of us had words handy to express in any way our feelings at what we saw.

A little down the mouth — twenty feet, perhaps — the pipe, that ran heaven alone knows how many miles down into the earth, narrowed, and here we saw the surface of the water gently boiling. Occasionally the water rose a few feet; occasionally it would sink the same distance; then, suddenly, it sank down — down — down with hollow, thunderous gurglings that grew softer till they died in an echoing whisper, giving us a most thrilling impression of vast and awful depth. Then

the whisperings would return, murmuring softly up to us, and the sound would grow in volume with a roar, and the water would again appear at its old level boiling violently about twenty feet down.

Again it sank, and we lay and listened and watched, just our eyes over the edge, and the immeasurable and horrible space below tickling the nerves of our stomachs like a feather. Then, as we waited, there came a distant, deep-down *thud*.

"It's coming all the way this time!" yelled Mr. Hawks, and we got somehow to our feet, now thoroughly aware of our foolishness in being there, for the sides of that basin sloped away, smooth and steep and polished, and to slip would mean a slow, struggling glide gently, gently downward, then over the edge and into the sixteen-foot-wide hole from which there now began to come louder reports and rumblings and a sudden jet of steam!

Hand in hand we struggled, our feet slipping and shooting out from under us, Mr.

Hawks, "Cert'nly" Wilfred, young Green, and myself. Then Mr. Hawks got a hold on the basin rim and a moment after I did the same, and practically we jerked young Green and Wilfred over as though they had been a piece of line!

Then we ran.

At a safe distance we turned, while the earth beneath us vibrated to reports, and the geyser threw up a gigantic pillar of boiling water that blew out in the wind until it looked like an ostrich feather a hundred and fifty feet high.

"Nearly 'ad us that time, it did," said Wilfred.

"I guess we are the biggest pack of fools in Christendom," said Mr. Hawks.

"No, cert'nly not!" remarked Wilfred. "We wanted to see its works, an' we see 'em — what more d'you want? As for getting biled, I think a squint down that 'ere drain was worth a bit of risk. I never did see nothing like it before!"



Hand in hand we struggled

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A little way up from the shores of the lake a brisk fire of moss and driftwood was burning, and by its side sat the cattleman, the negro, and the German, busily plucking the geese.

"Jes' look at my kitchin starff," cackled Wilfred, and set to building about the fire a knowing arrangement of stones, assisted by young Green. Meanwhile, Mr. Hawks and myself, choosing a sheltered slope close by the water, arranged the whale boat upon her beam ends, building round her stern and bows a protecting wall of sods, and stretching the sail above it all to form a roof. By the time it was finished, with only a small space left open as a doorway, it made a wind-proof shelter that a man could sit upright in; and by then the geese were cooked.

"Peter Scott's bound to come along sooner or later," remarked Mr. Hawks, "and we'll hope that it will be sooner rather than later. Of course he'll be heavily handicapped, for he has very few men to work the ship with. Ill

luck seems to follow me right along," he added savagely. "First the sealskins gone, then when I try a bit of whaling — this happens," and he swept his arm round in a circle. "The summer months, too," said he, "are not overlong in this part of the world."

"We do n't want to winter here, sir," said I, "on this island."

"Mighty little of the winter would we see, Grummet," was his comment. "Why, in a week or so these geese will have migrated south. I'm rather surprised to find them here as it is."

"There's a fair view of the sea from the rising ground just above here, sir," said I. "Shall I plant that steering oar by way of a flagstaff?"


Mr. Hawks nodded.

"Peter'll see that quick enough when he comes cruising around looking for us," said he.

Those geese were the best I ever tasted. It is true that they were roasted without flavoring and without vegetable accompaniment,

but that did not matter; and each man, getting his exact share, divided by Mr. Hawks' clasp knife, sat round, the meat in both hands, and silence reigned, broken only by the crackling of bones. I recollect thinking that we appeared very like dogs, and hungry ones at that!

After the meal was over, we seemed to be more immediately concerned with the future. Everything had been in abeyance until we had got some food inside us, for a man cannot, with any profit, contemplate a precarious future with an empty stomach. The cattleman and the German lay down to sleep; not so the negro. His glittering eye, even while we had been eating, had been busy scanning the many marshy islands in the lake, each dotted by its white-feathered residents that had now returned and were somewhat recovered from the fright we had given them. As there was practically no darkness there was no night to wait for, and the negro came to ask if he might go out after more geese.



It was quite fortunate for us that he was with us, for he undertook to keep us supplied with food, and he enjoyed himself vastly in the process. Though there was no wrathful owner of hencoops to rush out, shotgun in hand, the business of stalking the birds was no easy one, and the negro went after the work with something akin to joyous artistic endeavor glowing in his face. Anyway, he got the geese and that was the main thing for us.

"When Peter Scott lifts this old island over the horizon," began Mr. Hawks, "that column of steam will make him jump; he'll think we have hit a volcano, and he'll come right along."

"How far apart did you say these islands were, sir?" I asked.

"Sixty-two miles."

"And how high would you say that peak on the other island is?"

"Six or seven thousand."

"And this, sir?" said I, nodding to the snow-clad hill that rose in the interior.

"Maybe about the same, though it is nothing like as steep. Yes, I see what you mean, Grummet," said Mr. Hawks.

"From the top of one mounting," chimed in Wilfred, "you should see the other, eh?"

I nodded.

"An' a fat lot of good thet'll do yer. Though if the ship's within forty mile you ought ter see 'er with the glarses from up theer. Good! I propose we go," continued the little man, "nothink like hexercise after a full meal. I wonder how long it will take to get up theer?"

"One thing sure," said Mr. Hawks, "and that is—when in the Arctic you are setting out for a day's trip, be provisioned for a week."

"Well, we will take some cold geese with us," said Wilfred, "and 'ave a real 'appy time of it. I'd like to git to the top theer, an' 'ave a look round."

"We'll have a sleep first," said Mr. Hawks.

The negro was a marvel; he returned, after

some hours, with seven fine plump birds and a smile that reached from ear to ear.

"My word, Boot Polish!" exclaimed Wilfred, delightedly, "'ow in the world did yer do it?"

The negro laughed melodiously, towering above the little Englishman.

"Oh, ah jes' crep' along, an' kep' right along creepin'."

Now that the fierce edge of our appetite was gone, we could wait while Wilfred engaged himself in culinary variations. He intended to bake the new arrivals, and bake them he did, in mud — of all things! and I have never tasted goose better done, before or since.

"The whole art of cookin'," remarked Wilfred, "is ter keep the natural juices inside. This 'ere mud bakes 'ard as you please, enclosing geese hair-tight-like. When they's baked yer crack the mud coverin' an' orf it comes, takin' the skin an' the fevvers wiv it. Now, what about thet mounting top?"

CHAPTER VIII

IT was Mr. Hawks, Cert'nly Wilfred, and myself who finally started to climb the mountain. I had thought that young Green intended to accompany us, but he went off with the negro who was laying some cleverly constructed traps for anything that might be sufficiently misguided and thoughtless as to fall, run, walk, stumble, fly, or crawl into them. The German and the cattleman lay by the fire and grumbled—so differently are men constituted. We each had a cooked goose, extra clothing, and a piece of line, with a compass, an aneroid, and a pair of binoculars divided up amongst us. In fact we felt all the glow of the explorer, and thus equipped, started forth upon what was my first, and what will most certainly be my last (if I have any choice in the matter), mountaineering expedition.

We walked round the shore of the lake until we came to the mouth of the river, which filtered through a delta of mud and marsh, and striking inland along the river bank, made our way into the interior of the island. Now, I must remind the reader that a sailor is several degrees more clumsy than a blind cow when it comes to walking over rough ground. However much he is used to hanging onto a ship's rigging by his eyelids, he is accustomed to a more or less clear flat surface on deck. The pitching and rolling of a vessel he grows to allow for instinctively, and, except in very heavy weather, he is practically unconscious of the swaying movement of the deck. The result is that he takes short strides, hardly lifting his feet clear, placing one foot behind the other, like a cat on a wall. So, you must picture us three slipping, sliding, stumbling, stubbing our toes violently against the rocks with teeth-rattling suddenness, our progress punctuated by remarks that are not necessary to detail here. The river, once away from the

low-lying land about the lake, narrowed in a gorge, and became a fine stream with the bluish tinge that snow water usually has, and twisting and turning and roaring it cheered us by its living sound. I think that one of the most striking features of arctic lands in summer, if fine weather prevails, is the curious depressing stillness. In more temperate climes, the slightest gust of wind sets something on the move, and there are birds, and beasts, and men — sometimes too many of the latter. But in the Arctic, once away from the sea, there is little to make a sound if the wind does not happen to howl. The birds stay by the water, fresh or salt, leaving the barren uplands without life, and so still, so terribly without sound, as to sometimes get on a strong man's nerves. So we were glad of the noise of the river, for there is something innately merry in a rushing mountain stream.

After a few miles of scrambling, we were forced to leave the river and take to the uplands, and here Wilfred took upon himself

the part of silence breaker, and discoursed amiably upon all matters in general. But presently we came upon a startling barrier in our progress, and though we might have changed our line of march and passed round without delay, men are, after all, very much like boys on occasions.

The day (or night, I forget which it was, for there was practically no difference in the light) was mild, for no wind was blowing, and the low lying sun shone brightly enough to cast our elongated shadows before us. The upland rose at an ever increasing angle to the foot of the mountain, and here and there about us were patches of snow, dazzling white against the background of lava that was almost entirely devoid of vegetation. Our course had been easy enough, for the larger masses of lava could be avoided, and our path, though winding, might have been along a cinder track — which, as a matter of fact, it really was. Then at a point the earth opened before us in a rift that was for all the world

like a crack in a loaf of bread, only considerably larger. It was, if I may put it that way, one of the world's big things, and the most conceited, self-opinionated politician would have felt like nothing at all after standing at its edge for five minutes; in fact, only very ordinary people like Mr. Hawks, Cert'nly Wilfred, and myself, who had not an over-large opinion of ourselves to start with, could regard it for long and retain any estimation of themselves whatever. To describe it literally would be to explain that at some time, not yesterday, nor the day before, a portion of that volcanic island had taken into its head to split and draw apart. It had arranged itself more comfortably, as it were, to the cooling process then in vogue, and a superficial crack or two no doubt eased matters up wonderfully, for, after all, the size of things is purely relative. To us that crack ran along for several miles, and we endeavored to ascertain its depth by heaving a stone over.

Mr. Hawks, poised like a Greek figure,

launched a large rock neatly into the centre of that crevice that was here about a hundred feet wide. The stone vanished from the light like some great gray bird, and the illusive sigh of its passage through the air was the only sound that came to us — not a murmur, not a whisper, not even the echo of a far-distant splash, for apparently it chanced not to strike the sides.

“Still falling, I guess,” said Mr. Hawks, grimly, after we had waited for several minutes in appalled silence.

“Sompthink like an ’ole in the ground, thet is,” remarked Wilfred, “this hisland would be a paradise to a murderer. ’E could bile ’is victim fust in thet theer geeser, then let ’im ’ave a go in ’ere, an’ if ’e was n’t dead by the time ’e fetched up with a jar at the bottom of this ’ere jasam ’e ’d be no mortal man like you an’ me, no ’e would n’t, not ’im!”

Then the stone mania attacked us all three, and we labored and sweated, gathering stones from afar just for the pleasure of tip-

ping them over the edge and listening to their descent until even the faintest whisper of their progress died upon its long journey up to us.

"This is one better than lookin' darn thet drain," said Wilfred, "my word! This hisland's a joke, it is!"

Lying suddenly prone, the little man put his head over the edge while I, uncertain of what his next rash move might be, grabbed him securely by the feet and was about to open my mouth in very direct speech when he deadened all other sound by the exercise of a truly cockney accomplishment. He desired to hear the echo, and placing the tips of two fingers into his mouth he produced a whistle that offended the ear.

"Tax-i!" he yelled.

"'Ax-i — 'ax-i — 'ax-i — !" came the echo together with the whistle, then was repeated again and again, with odd and amazing insistence. It was startling—and I pictured an army of unknown figures grouped about far down below, miles from the sunlight, re-

peating like a parrot a chance word that had been flung down to them from above, and I remember wondering if this was the first time a human voice had been tossed about in that region of everlasting darkness.

But Wilfred was not impressed.

"Piccadilly," he called, "Piccadilly, 'Yde Park, Sloane Square, Sloane Square — Piccadilly, 'Yde Park, Sloane Square, Sloane Square, Piccadilly!"

Mr. Hawks laughed out loud, and his voice joined in the echoes.

"L'bole Street," continued Wilfred, "L'bole Street, Benk, Benk, darn Obern, Benk, Benk!" then he whistled: "Let's all go darn the Strand an' git a bernarner!"

For a full hour we amused ourselves, then continued along one edge of that chasm until it ended sharply in a slope, and here we stood regarding this incline attentively.

"I'd like to go down," said I thoughtfully, "it looks easy enough there, sir."

"Let's rope together an' try," suggested

Wilfred, eagerly. "I'll bet my 'at there's things down theer what is strange."

"No," said Mr. Hawks, "too dangerous, and I can't afford to risk losing either of you, let alone myself."

"Dangerous!" exclaimed Wilfred, "didn't know we lived such bloomin' safe lives anyway — come on!"

"No!" barked Mr. Hawks.

"Oh golliess!" gasped Wilfred, exasperated and fidgeting. Then he cackled with laughter. "'Ere, Grummet," said he, "let's 'eave our perishin' Commandin' Horficer darn. Now 's the time to mutiny!"

We then began to climb in earnest, and a long steep incline stretched up before us to the snow above, just a great slope of loosely piled rocks entirely devoid of vegetation. And by the very lie of those stones an experienced mountaineer would have gone far to avoid that way up the mountain; but we, in our ignorance, started vigorously forth. It was heavy going, and after a bit we paused,

and I leaned panting against a rock the size of a railroad engine — and — that rock gently moved! It was particularly amazing, and I let out a yell of warning.


With a gradual subsidence, that rock of, perhaps, three hundred tons in weight, started down the hill with ever increasing speed. It did not roll over and over, but glissaded with growing momentum, drawing on behind it a wake of smaller stones that grew in number and size until a river of stones was roaring downwards, setting up an incredible sound and a dust of powdered rock. The entire mountain side appeared precariously poised, and we three infinitesimal men stood mesmerized by the sight. And then the avalanche as suddenly ceased, and the backwash buried the leading stone fathoms deep.

"You did that, Grummet," said Wilfred, "don't you go a-leanin' agin this fragile mounting, or you'll wipe it off the map!"

"Guess we'd better go carefully," remarked Mr. Hawks.

"Great 'ulking brute you are," continued Wilfred, "*leave the mounting alone, carn't yer?*"

After that we trod more warily, and moved upwards in a line, roped together; it was with some relief that we reached the snow line. The snow did not begin gradually, as I, in my ignorance of mountain climbing had supposed, but in an abrupt, overhanging wall twenty feet high. It was obvious to us that the height of that wall constituted the thickness of the snow lying above, and that the reason the snow began so abruptly was owing to an avalanche, breaking off that snow blanket sharp and clear; this had probably happened in the spring. The snow above appeared to be as precariously adjusted as the stones, and it so happened that at that very moment I recollected reading somewhere how a shout would often bring down thousands of tons of snow in the Alps. Meanwhile we stood and gazed upwards, all three with our hearts in our mouths. Then we



walked along beneath that leaning wall of snow with our heads bent and our shoulders raised, with rather the same sort of feelings a man has just the moment before he has a tooth extracted, or worse. Had any one of us suggested a return to camp we would have started back without a word.

After scrambling for about half a mile, the snow wall grew suddenly less until it was only about three feet high, and here Mr. Hawks, with his face set and grim, climbed up, his feet sinking only a few inches. Wilfred followed and I brought up the rear after waiting while the line between us tightened up. Then in a zig-zag course we started.

We were now within a reasonable distance of the peak that shot up into the sky a sharp point, the sides appearing smooth, and shining. We did not speak, only panted for breath, about thirty feet apart, the line tight between us. The extraordinary, unbroken whiteness of the snow, tilted at an angle that brought the sun's rays almost directly upon it,


made the eyes ache painfully, and our weather-stained faces looked as black as a negro's against it.

It is a fine exciting thing to approach a mountain top. It is exciting because you expect to see much more than you do see, and fine because you are yearning to sit down.

So it was with us. We had no sooner reached the summit than down we sat in the snow, unrolled our packs, hacked off a leg and a wing of roast goose and set to work. Over the top of the roast goose we were eating we contemplated the view with preoccupied eyes.

"There's the other island," said Mr. Hawks, nodding his head with his mouth full.

Above the horizon, in a northeasterly direction, a snow peak stood against the salmon-colored sky; for the rest, the horizon ran an unbroken ring, for it was a fine clear day with little or no wind. Beneath us, a little white plume showed where the geyser was, and with the glasses we could make out our en-



campment. Then we swept the sea for some sign of the *Effie Dean*, but beyond a field of ice to the southward the sea stretched out a level, dimpling floor of lapis lazuli.

We ate, sighed, ate again, then sat relaxed and comfortable and attended to the scene before us. The other side of the island presented no feature of remark, though it was quite different from the side where we had landed, lying higher, with cliffs, and a barrier of rocks that drew a fringe of surf across the sea like the out-flung trenches of an army.

"I 've 'ad about enough of this 'ere mounting top," remarked Wilfred, the ever-restless. "There ain't no *Effie Dean*, and though we can see the top of the other island, it's not pertic'ler gratifyin', seein' as 'ow we carn't fly theer."

We remained for about an hour, and a gradual change began to come over the scene as the wind sprang up and gray masses of fog manufactured themselves out of nothing.

"That field of ice," said Mr. Hawks, "is

responsible for the fog. Guess we 'd better be moving."

"Yus, come on," said Wilfred, as eager to be off as a terrier.

Down the snow slope we went without difficulty, treading with care and still, of course, roped together, and when we were once more near the commencement of the stones the weather had altered completely, and not relishing the thought of being caught in a blizzard, we hurried onwards.

"Going to snow," said Mr. Hawks. "I can smell it."

"Well, that will indeed be strange," remarked Wilfred, gravely, "goin' ter snow, didyerever?"

"Wilfred," said Mr. Hawks, "you have no respect for your commanding officer."

"None whatever," replied the little man, "why should I?"

"Your words are mutinous," remarked Mr. Hawks, placidly.

"Oh, I'm a terror when I'm prop'ly

roused, reg'ler Jeck Johnson," and he laughed shrilly. "Oh, my eye!" he cried suddenly, "look what 's comin'!"

We looked.

We were still a hundred yards or more from the end of the snow, and a moaning eddy of wind swept icily across that dazzling expanse. Above us we were appalled to see the actual shape of the mountain peak alter, and as we watched a great wave of snow came curling downwards. It came with a noise like thunder, thousands of tons of it, the most terrifying thing I have ever seen!

I dimly heard Mr. Hawks shout: "*Here's our finish!*" and there followed a crack, not unlike a vast sheet of glass breaking, and we found ourselves moving downwards. We were thrown violently from our feet as several acres of frozen snow on which we happened to be moved downwards, intact, over the roaring stones. The avalanche leapt behind us, but we, separately, moved on ahead. I dimly realized that we were mixed up in some every-

day affair of the mountain's; that an incredible mass of snow was thundering down from the summit, and that we, on a smaller portion of that snow blanket, which had happened to break off, were racing ahead of the avalanche like men on a raft. How, precisely, I was going to die I could not decide, for I was in surroundings that were entirely new to me, but that death was coming, and coming quickly too, was obvious, and the deafening sound of the avalanche behind us made the act of dying seem more horrible. And then that wave of snow spilled out, toppled over, like a wave of sea when it meets the beach, and only a small portion of it ultimately reached us, turning us about, over and over, leaving me neck deep and Mr. Hawks buried to his waist; of Wilfred there was no sign. Except for a thousand avalanches in miniature that continued to stream downward it was over, and Mr. Hawks and I somehow freed ourselves; between us the rope ran down deep into the snow. Frantically we set

to work hauling on the rope and shoveling the snow away and finally extricated Wilfred who was stuttering speechless with — rage!

We were alive by a miracle, saved by a trick as it were. For had not that stretch of frozen snow mysteriously broken from the rest and gone on ahead independently of the avalanche and bearing us with it, we would have been buried hundreds of feet deep, and still roped together, preserved for all time, three minute specimens of the human animal.

By the time that we arrived upon the uplands, Wilfred had regained his usual amiability.

“You said it would snow,” he remarked, “an’ snow it did!”

CHAPTER IX

WITH anything like promising weather," said Mr. Hawks, "we should do the trip in fifteen or twenty hours," and he cut himself another piece of roast goose.

It was about twelve hours after our descent from the mountain, and Mr. Hawks, Cert'nly Wilfred, and myself had put in a good spell of sleep. We were now discussing the advisability of making an attempt to reach the other island, the exact bearings of which we had taken from the mountain.

"There are some good reasons for staying here, sir, all the same," said I, "until Peter comes along — as he is bound to do — in the course of time."

Mr. Hawks nodded.

"Given fine weather," said he, "and the trip would be child's play; given bad weather and

the trip would be man's work and mighty hard at that; given a blizzard say, or a heavy gale, with a lot of ice knocking about and — I guess we would n't get there."

"An' when we 'ad got theer," remarked Wilfred, as he carefully combed his long dark hair with a pocket comb, curling it down over either temple in the correct East End manner, "it would be to find Peter gone 'untin' for us, and theer we'd be as 'appy as Larry with nothink to eat, for the geese do n't come ter thet hother island they way they do 'ere."

Mr. Hawks nodded again.

"But I just hate sitting down and doing nothing," said he. "I never could regard patience as a virtue — I think it's better to be up and doing."

"Even if it's the wrong thing?" asked Wilfred. "Besides, I do n't propose doin' nothin'. Nothin' would make me do nothin'; and doin' nothin' 's doin' somethin', even if the nothin' is somethin' that 's nothin' it 's somethin' all the same."

"Take a drink of cold water," said I, "you 'll feel better soon."

"Are you going to climb the mountain again?" asked Mr. Hawks.

"No, not me!" replied Wilfred, promptly, "I 've 'ad about enough of these 'ere mountings this trip. No more winter sports for me. I think I 'll jes' take a run darn to dear old Monte. Seriously speakin' I 'm going' to hexplore the other shore of this island."

"Glad you are not going to leave us," said I.

"Not jest yet awhile. I 'll stay on her till the twelf' an' then take a run up onto the moors an' see 'ow the birds is gettin' along. Maybe I 'll stay at Balmoral."

Without any definite action on anyone's part, our camp had divided itself into "for-'ard" and "aft," proving conclusively the inequality of man. We had landed upon that island seven men in distress; we had all started out to examine the geyser, but only four had actually investigated that wonder;

and only three of us had climbed the mountain. Though the boat and sails and protecting walls of sod were common shelter to us all, the German, the negro, the cattleman, and young Green remained as much in the "forecastle" as if they had been on the ship, while Mr. Hawks and myself, by some subtle distinction, remained "aft" in command. Between the two, for appearance's sake, Wilfred had made himself a snug abode under an overhanging rock, which abode he named Number 36a, 'Ack Street, Tidal Basin, North Woolwich, E.; but as we three were continually in conversation, as was natural between such old friends, he spent most of his time "aft" with us.

There was no scarcity of food. The negro had found his old methods not only too slow, but too laborious as well, and so had collected eight small stones of about equal size, and had attached them each by eight separate pieces of line all joined together in a knot. His method then was simple. He would "walk

up " his game, and when a goose rose he would let fly this weapon, and the stones, once in the air, would describe a circle, the eight lines with a stone at each end radiating from a common centre; any kind of fool could hit a goose with such an engine of destruction!

So there was some reason in our hesitation to leave this land of plenty. In almost any other part of the world an open boat cruise of sixty-two miles would have been nothing whatever to men hardened to the sea as we were; but knowing well what extremities of cold were possible, to say nothing of advancing fields of heavy polar ice, we ultimately decided to wait for Peter Scott to turn up, which, so we decided, he was bound to do before long.

Wilfred and I argued the matter out thoroughly as we walked along the shores of the island, finding this course the easiest traveling, though, naturally, it was the longest way round to the other side of the island. There were fine stretches of hard sand, finer than a

macadamized road to walk upon, and on one side of us crashed the surf, while upon the other the cliffs rose higher and higher, while gannets and gulls, disturbed by our presence, wheeled and circled in multitudes above us. To the south the horizon had a white line of ice upon it, otherwise the sea was clear and blue and rough with a piping merry wind, cold, strong and exhilarating. The sun, though pursuing a course not very far above the horizon, was still the sun, and all that is the very essence of life. It occurred to us both that one day, not very far off, the sun would set, only for a short time, it is true; but reappearing again it would set again and remain a little longer behind the horizon, going a little further each time until dusk prevailed, a cold, misty dusk with a momentary blood-red sunrise and sunset in one, that each day would be shorter, until the sun no longer appeared, and only washed the sky with colors. Then these colors would fade, gradually each day growing less as the year progressed,

until night set in to reign through howling months of incredible cold.

Rounding a projecting cliff, we came as suddenly to a stand as though arrested by the blast from a trumpet, for there, built against the cliff, in shelter, yet well above where the winter ice must pile, was a human dwelling!

It was of the roughest workmanship, constructed of stones, driftwood and sods of earth, yet it was unmistakably a human dwelling and melancholy beyond words to describe.

With one impulse we ran forward, and arrived panting and amazed, and searching low we found a door that had once been the flooring boards of a boat. Without ceremony we opened this, and put our heads inside. All was dark and still, with a smell of earth. I fumbled for matches and entered. The light revealed some cooking utensils, a roughly constructed table, and a row of bunks round the walls like a shelf, one or two books, a compass, some boats' gear, and a bundle of clothes half on the table, half on a box that

had done service as a chair. Then the match went out. Wilfred struck another and advanced to the bundle of clothing.

"Thought so," said he, and in moving the clothes a human skull rolled out of the folds, slowly across the table, and fell to the earthen floor with a dry, rattling crack.

"The rest of 'im is inside the clothes," said Wilfred, lifting a coat arm and exposing a skeleton hand. "He died leanin' on the tyble, 'e did, pore bloke. Some more in the bunks, I s'pose."

I struck another match as Wilfred's went out.

"Yus," said the little man, peering down and examining, "one, two, three, four of 'em, all dead, they are, poor blokes."

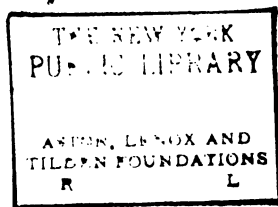
"Come," said I, and took a book from the table.

The book was lying open before the bundle of clothes. I saw writing in it, and led the way out through the low doorway onto that lonely arctic beach



A human skull rolled out of the folds

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"All dead, they are," repeated Wilfred in a matter-of-fact voice as he followed me out. Then together we stood and examined that priceless book.

It was a common pocket diary two years old, and on the flyleaf was written "Thomas Andrew Mellor, Bristol, Maine, U. S. A." The first entry, early in January, was apparently the price paid for a horse and buggy.

"Turn to where the writin' stops," said Wilfred, impatiently.

"November twenty-first," I read aloud. "Cosgrave's dead, I think I'll be dead soon. It's terrible to be left behind this way, to be the last—" the writing broke off here, then continued in a scrawl down the page: "Oh, Martha, I shall never see you again—"

"Pore bloke!" said Wilfred, "'e died then, 'e did!"

Gradually, as we turned the pages, the tragedy they recorded sank into us. Men who live haphazard lives are not easy to impress, but we were impressed—even Wilfred was

impressed — by a curious coincidence made known to us through the pages of that dead man's diary.

That dead man and his dead mates had been whalers. They had met and harpooned a "nor'wester," a particularly vicious specimen — so had we. They had gone off in tow, so the diary continued to inform us, as we had done. A fog came on, and all sight of their ship was lost — so it had been with us! They had spent four days in their boat after cutting from the whale, and had then sighted the island. Glad of any shelter they had sailed into the very estuary we had arrived by, and the diarist commented upon the geese and the geyser and — with a sudden shock and a moment's calculation, I realized that they had arrived precisely two years to the day before us!

"We shall do very well," I read, "and there are many reasons for staying here until the ship comes along — as it is bound to do — in the course of time."

Wilfred and I looked at each other.

"Jes' precisely what we said this mornin'," remarked Wilfred, "almost word for word! I call it tactless!" and he whistled softly through his teeth.

The writer then went on to describe the departure of the geese, and every day the journal ended with "No ship today." Occasionally he remarked upon the coming winter, and apparently being an active man he had climbed to the mountain top and had made a sketch map of the island. Later on he did not refer to the ship's non-arrival; that subject seemed to have been carefully avoided by that forlorn little company until later. There followed blank pages, extraordinarily dramatic in their emptiness, then more writing to say that two of their number were dead. Here he frankly spoke of the ship and the conclusion that he had come to was that the vessel had met with one of the half-dozen possibilities that exist in the arctic seas and had been wrecked. "Island entirely beset by heavy

polar ice," was the ending to this; then more blank pages.

Some remarks followed about a week after upon the hut they had built, and the spot they had chosen to build it in. They had wanted to remain near the geyser on account of its heat, but apparently the wind blew there upon that unsheltered upland in such a manner that no hut they could build would stand, and so they seemed to have lost another of their number who never returned from a seal hunt. That entry ended with: "High living today . . ." (I suppose on account of the bear they had killed), and there followed: "*The sun is gone until next year.*"

"Golly me!" exclaimed Wilfred, and repeated: "The sun is gone until next year!" and he paused while we eyed each other.

"Fancy starvin' 'ere," said he, "starvin' and freezin' and knowin' there was to be seven or eight months night! Well, they died, pore blokes."

Then there followed seven weeks of blank

pages, ending with a scrawl upon Saturday, October the tenth: "Cosgrave ill, starving, Bennet, Williams, and Briant dead." Then a further series of blank pages until the first I had read: "November twenty-first. Cosgrave's dead, I think I'll be dead soon. It's terrible to be left behind this way, to be the last—" the writing breaking off here and then finally finishing with: "Oh, Martha, I shall never see you again —"

I closed the book reverently.

"There may be some letters or journals," said I. "We may be able to restore them to their friends and relatives."

"We may —" said Wilfred, and smiled.

Once more we entered the house of skeletons.

I refrain from details, and will simply say that wherever we found some personal belonging we took it on chance that we would be able to hand it to some relative belonging to that tragic crew of bones. Little useless things for the most part, a silver pencil, a jack-

knife, two watches, several rings that hung loosely, and various oddments that might be of untold value to someone as all that remained of a husband, a father, a lover, or a son. With a gasp we regained the open air, neither of us quite ourselves.

"Pore blokes!" said Wilfred, "pore, pore blokes; starvin' and freezin' together. *The sun is gone till next year!* Oh my! That was no catch, s'elp me it was n't!"

We returned towards our encampment, walking for some little way in silence.

"I wonder why Peter has n't shown up." I ventured at last.

"Ah," said Wilfred, rolling a cigarette, "let's see. When we cut from thet first whale, Peter was bearin' sou'-east-'nd-by-east-'an-'arf-east on us. Thet is, we was trav'-lin' away from 'im nor'-wes'-'nd-b'-wes'-'nd-an'-'arf-west, in which direction 'e may be expected to be lookin' for us. But meanwhile, durin' the fog, we drifts goodness knows where, south prob'ly, then sails off a good many miles to this island."

"So it is quite possible for us to be all of a hundred miles from the spot where Peter last saw us," said I.

"Yes, cert'nly."

"In any other part of the world it would n't matter," said I, "but with the winter coming on —"

"Makes things different, and rather alters our plans about stayin' 'ere."

"As how?" I asked.

We came to a pause, facing each other gravely.

"Well now, s'posing Peter goes on lookin' for us, as 'e will, and 'e do n't find us as 'e won't — unless 'e comes along to this island. And time parses, winter comes on, the sun — you know — (I nodded) and 'eavy polar ice comes along down lookin' for trouble. Peter may 'ave to get southwards and leave us, whether 'e likes it or not. Very well then. Where, arks you, is *the* larst place 'e will give a final look? Why, on the other island in course! So it be'ooves us to get there, and as soon as we can, says I."

"You say correctly, too, I think," I answered.

With the exception of Mr. Hawks, the effect of our discovery was very marked upon the others. Young Green kept a stiff upperlip, for, as Wilfred said, young Green was "all wool and a yard wide," but his face looked drawn and older, for no one wants to die a terrible death when he is young and strong. The German frankly gave way to despair and the negro to almost childish grief. The cattleman (bad, but all of a man) became morose and sullen. Mr. Hawks changed not a muscle, nor had I, I think, but then my face is, perhaps, too battered to show much expression. Wilfred was seemingly wholly unaffected, except for a certain gravity that was due to a respect for those dead men and all they had suffered. How he might suffer I am quite sure never occupied his thoughts.

"We must bury them," said Mr. Hawks. "Does any one know the burial service, or part of it?"

He looked round.

"D' you, Grummet?"

I shook my head.

"Green?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid I do n't."

Mr. Hawks looked at Wilfred.

"What, me!" exclaimed the little man, then shook his head.

"I do n't come of a buryin' fambly," said he; then after a pause: "My father went up with the West 'Am gas works, 'e did, when the timber yard next door caught fire."

Mr. Hawks grinned at him. Whether the remark was a true statement of what happened to his father I do not know, but I think that it was invented on the spot, for it lightened our gloom just a trifle as we each in our different way had a momentary vision of Wilfred's father (with his bald head and of "smoked 'addic" fame) sailing skyward never to return.

By methods not too gentle, the negro and the German were induced to take their share

of the sad work in hand, and though that crew of skeletons was buried each without a coffin (because we could not make coffins), and without the orthodox prayers for the dead (because we could not remember any), I doubt if five men ever had a more reverent burial. It was not easy work but it was managed, and at the head of each we drove a stake, and in a pile of stones we placed a note inside a tin tobacco box, stating who they were, who we were, the date and the fact that we had taken such of their belongings as we could find in case we might be able to hand them over to some friends or relatives of the departed.

"And I wonder," said Wilfred, as we returned, "who will bury us."

It had been a trying business and everyone's nerves were a bit stretched. We continued in silence until suddenly the cattleman broke out.

"This is what comes of your whaling," he said thickly, "this is your doing!" and he glared at Mr. Hawks.

"Shut your head," snapped Mr. Hawks.

"I'll not shut my head!" he answered, and Wilfred laughed.

"We're not on shipboard!" he continued with a shout.

"Shipboard!" repeated Wilfred, "list'n to the perishin' landsman! *Ship-board!*"

"So you have no call to order me about, see?" and the cattleman rushed his commander. He employed a method of warfare known best to himself, in which fists and teeth and feet were to be freely used. But he got a clean, straight smack on the point of his chin and went down with a sound like a sack of grain that had been dropped from a height.

"P'lice — murder — fire!" cackled Wilfred.

The cattleman got slowly to his feet.

"Sail-o!!! " I yelled, and my voice cracked.

Everyone spun round, including the cattleman, and beyond a point of land to the southward we beheld the well-patched canvas of the *Effe Dean!!*

In less than three minutes our shelter, of which the whale boat was an integral part, was demolished by ruthless hands, and the whale boat run down the beach and launched. Helter-skelter, her gear was thrown in, and on the top of it half a dozen geese that the negro had recently brought into camp. Our scattered possessions were collected, hardly a man daring to take his eyes off the distant ship for fear she would vanish like a ghost. But the ship was no ghost; she was solid reality, and a man having picked us out from the crow's nest had given the word to the deck, and the schooner, with shortened sail, rounded to in the mouth of the estuary. Never were men so eager as we. Even the cattleman momentarily forgot the blow he had just received and tried to laugh with the rest, but it is painful to even grin with a swollen jaw and the cattleman's attempts ended with a loud "Ouch" at which the negro laughed the harder.

A strong, cold, northerly wind bustled us with swelling canvas amid the islands of the

lake, and every man with a wrapt expression continued to eye the ship. Hardly a man glanced backwards, but each in his separate way was conscious of an overwhelming relief, an emotion so great and exultant as to be hidden deep down for fear of some hysterical display.

A lively sea was running in the open estuary, but what cared we? All was well, and Mr. Hawks whistled merrily through his teeth. The German babbled to the negro, who laughed continually and melodiously, with red gums and flashing teeth; the cattleman and young Green laid vigorous hands upon the boat's gear and chattered amiably as they stowed it more handily. I sat trying not to grin too broadly with the sheet in my hand, and, as I have said, Mr. Hawks whistled merrily through his teeth.

"Cert'nly" Wilfred remained unaltered. Bland and amiable as ever, he was prepared to ridicule our sudden hilarity with caustic cockney wit.

"Wheer's the bride?" he asked, "like a bloomin' weddin' party, this is; 'ark to the Voice that breathed o'er Eden!"

The schooner was short-handed, but Peter Scott was a sailorman, and with extreme nicety and precision, drifted down upon us, giving us his lee. Ropes were thrown and wildly clutched, and we scrambled up as the *Effie Dean* wallowed heavily down upon the whale boat, blotting it out of existence, the geese that we had brought out with us floating off in patches of grotesque whiteness at which the negro wrung his hands.

You would think that there might be some hand-shaking, but the *Effie* was an Anglo-Saxon ship. Had we been Latins, there would, perhaps, have been a deal of embracing with volumes of talk; as it was, Mr. Hawks and Peter shook hands, almost surreptitiously, and in an incredibly short time we had jerked back to normal sea life.

The cattleman, the negro, the German, and young Green went forward into the forecastle

as though they had just returned from a day's trip ashore. Wilfred went to his galley like a bullet and became loud and shrill in criticism of the temporary cook who had filled his place during his absence, heaping the most personal and minute insults upon the temporary cook's head for the manner in which he had neglected that usually spotless galley. However, he was apparently his old self in a few hours' time, for I heard him singing "Oh, Mr. Porter," and "Life on the Ocean Wyve," at the top of his voice, while we, under reefed canvas, smothered through a snowstorm so thick you could hardly make out the foremast from the poop.

Twenty hours after, we were once more back at our old anchorage, for all the world as though we had never left it.

The men forgot all about the risk they had run, and returned to work and to grumbling once more. In a week all the remaining holes that gaped in the hull of the sealer were patched up. I confess that it was a weary,

trying business. The men growled, cursed and threatened; and once, an iron belaying pin came flying out of the darkness across the afterdeck, and missed my ear by an inch. But the work went on, and Mr. Hawks, as ferocious as a bear, drove all before him.

Gloom descended upon the ship, a gloom that was reenforced by an arctic climate and scenery; and no one except Wilfred showed any cheerfulness whatever. I was expecting open mutiny at any moment, for the cattleman was again at his little game of "working things up" as Wilfred called it.

We heard through young Green and Wilfred that the cattleman argued that since we were so far from any law, the crew could do as they liked, once they had thrown over all authority. But he forgot that the very conditions which he argued were in their favor were also in ours. Nowadays a shipmaster cannot shoot down a member of his crew with impunity *unless* such a drastic course is necessary to maintain the discipline without which

the safety of no ship is secure. If a ship is a thousand miles or more away from law courts and police, a shipmaster's position is one of absolute power. And Mr. Hawks was one to use all the power of his position.

We began to notice a change in the climate. It was never warm, and it now began to grow even colder. Occasionally it snowed for hours and the snow would lie thick for a time. The long, dark, arctic night was approaching, and it was time for us to move. Yet there still remained two weeks before the wreck would be ready, and before the high tide Mr. Hawks was counting on would arrive.

We had patched the hull to the best of our ability, had hoisted the fallen foremast aboard, had rigged up a windlass and carried out a long warp astern to heave short upon. We had provisioned the wreck, carried enough coal aboard her to warm the salving crew, rigged a jury mast and bent sail upon her; but there was much still to do.

Wilfred and I made several trips ashore,

and explored the island. We had climbed up and walked across one end to view the other side, but the going had been rough, and we had met with deep snow in a valley on the way. So we confined our attentions to our more immediate neighbourhood. The uplands above the cliffs were not without charm, a weird, cold, lonely charm — humming winds, powdered snow, and great wide views of sea and sky.

What birds there were had departed south, and there was no sign of life. The desolation of it all was not without romance, and the little Londoner and I enjoyed it, rather like two schoolboys in a haunted room.

There was one place inland, a valley from which no view of the sea could be obtained, and in which patches of snow had lain deep all summer. We had walked through this valley more than once to enjoy a prospect in which the sea had no part.

We built a cairn of stones over a tin box, enclosing a slip of paper on which we had

written our names, the name of the ship, and the date. We wondered how many years, if not ages, would pass before they would be discovered.

But our wanderings upon the island were brought to an abrupt end by a message from the crew that they refused to assist further in the salving of the wreck, and that, owing to approaching winter, they demanded that we forthwith return to civilization. This, indeed, was a declaration of war, and in answer Mr. Hawks summoned all hands aft.

CHAPTER X

AT Mr. Hawks' order young Green, of course, came aft willingly enough; but it was not until I was about to descend and drive the men on deck that they finally appeared from the forecastle hatch, led, of course, by the cattleman. They were in a bad mood, and the situation was precarious. They were sullen and frightened, and easily might turn frenzied, but the cattleman was cool enough, for whatever his faults might be, he was no coward. They had come, and meant to get their way, by fair means or foul, and would be frightened only at first.

They shuffled aft, and stood in a semicircle. The atmosphere was charged with suspense, overloaded with a foreboding of events shortly to happen, and I felt curiously alive to every detail of the scene. Wilfred, I think, felt the same, for he ceased from his work and leaned

against the galley door, his hand resting with suspicious readiness in his hip pocket. "Cert'nly" Wilfred was very much awake.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hawks practiced to perfection an old, old trick — a trick used by countless shipmasters in similar circumstances. With his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth, he walked up and down, apparently quite oblivious of the presence of the crew. His air was one of complete detachment, and when he removed his cigar from his lips it was to whistle softly between his teeth. For the most part, the skipper's back was turned squarely to the men, who shuffled quietly and nervously from time to time, feeling angry, anxious, and self-conscious.

Suddenly, Mr. Hawks spun round upon his heel and snapped out, "Well?"

His action was so unexpected and so sudden, and his voice so like the angry bark of a dog, that every man, including even the cockney and myself, started. No one spoke. An intense silence enwrapped the ship. Only the

singing of a galley kettle and the murmur of the distant waterfalls broke the stillness, and the men, with their eyes roving about the deck, stood still.

Then the cattleman shifted his feet, and swallowed audibly.

"We demand that you take this ship home, Cap'n. We won't stay any longer up here, monkeying with the wreck," said he, sullenly.

Mr. Hawks gazed full at the speaker, as if he had been an unusual animal, and then laughed softly, and elaborately relighted his cigar. I do not think there was a man who did not watch that match flame burning steadily in the still air as it was raised by a hand that was as firm as a rock. I smiled to myself, for it was an admirable little bit of "show-off," and the men realized that their commander was in no way disturbed by the situation — and they were.

Silence returned to the ship. Then the farmer, to my surprise, found his voice, and after a gurgle or two, said:

"We are scared of the winter — and — and bein' as how we 'll be short of hands, as I guess you will require some of us on the wreck to work her back home. That — that's what we 're scared of, Cap'n."

"Did I ask you if you were scared of anything?" asked Mr. Hawks, gazing fixedly at the farmer, who, finding himself now thrown into undue prominence by his action, again lost his voice. "Did I ask you if you were scared?" asked Mr. Hawks, and his voice was soft as velvet stroked the right way. Then he began speaking more rapidly:

"Do you imagine that I intend to consult your wishes in the least particular about the movements of the wreck? Do you think, by any chance, that I am not captain here?"

Then the cattleman spoke up. "We came to work this ship, boss, not any old thing you might find floating round!" said he, angrily. "We came as sailors, not as sla —"

"*As what?*" shouted Mr. Hawks, in a voice like a trumpet.

"Sailors, not slaves!" repeated the cattleman, and I could see that he was gaining courage from the sound of his own voice.

"Sailors?" reiterated Mr. Hawks, and again his voice was soft. He seemed incredulous.

"There are only three sailors on this ship," he continued. "They are myself, Mr. Grummet, and Mr. Scott. You are not sailors; you never will be. You do n't know the difference between a mainsheet and a funnel stay. You were not shipped as sailors. You were shipped to do as I say, and — you will do as I say!"

The farmer, encouraged by the voice of his leader, broke forth again:

"Guess we always done our duty, anyways."

"You have tried to do your duty, yes. But shall I tell you why? Because you were scared to death of the hammering you would get if you did n't. I'll haze you!" Mr. Hawks cried fiercely: "I'll haze you till you can't stand! You whiskey-drinking pests! You are a shame to your country! You're a pack of

tragedies, you 're worse than no good, and if any of you dare to disobey any of my orders, or even hesitate about carrying them out — I 'll — shoot — that — man — on the spot! Go below, the watch!”

They all turned except the cattleman, who stood firm, his face dark with rage.

“ Oh, if only I had a gun!” he shouted.

As if by magic, a big revolver appeared in Mr. Hawks hand, and I blinked in expectation of what was to follow. Up went the cattleman's hands above his head. “ All right, boss,” said he, coolly. “ Do n't shoot!”

“ Why should n't I?” demanded Mr. Hawks.

“ You heard what I said? I ordered the watch below — you disobeyed that order —”

“ Do n't shoot, boss,” repeated the cattleman, but without any whine in his voice.

“ Why should n't I?” again asked Mr. Hawks, and his voice was hard.

“ It's you that stir up the trouble,” he continued. “ I have treated you men better than

any shipmaster or owner afloat. I pay you well — much more than I need pay; I feed you well, and never once have I or my officers so much as cursed you while you do your duty. I expect good men, and I have treated you at first as such; I judged you innocent until most of you proved that you were guilty — guilty of laziness, dirtiness, and mess! You are a pack of worthless brutes, and you, in particular, are the worst. It's you that plan the murdering of myself and my officers, and it's you that should be shot!"

He leaned forward a little and leveled the revolver with deadly accuracy of aim at the bridge of the cattleman's nose. The man remained standing as he was, with his hands held aloft, his face screwed up, but with no trace of fear. He was of the kind that hold up trains and stages; he was bad, but he was brave. Only this time he was not the armed bandit dealing with a Pullman-car load of frightened passengers.

The others stood, as they had turned, mo-

tionless and rooted to the spot, while Mr. Hawks, as grim as death, glowered down the pistol barrel. The cattleman straightened out his face and stood up to his death with only a quivering eyelid; and Mr. Hawks appeared appallingly grim and powerful, while the rest of us, forgotten and self-forgotten, stood paralyzed with interest. We were struck in odd attitudes of absorbed concentration, like a clumsy tableau, with mouths open and goggling eyes. Suddenly young Green gave a loud sob and covered his face with his hands.

"Go on!" growled the cattleman, hoarsely. "Do n't keep me fooling round all day!"

Bang!

A bullet whistled past the cattleman's right ear, just grazing it.

Bang!

A bullet grazed his left arm and buried itself with a dull *phutt!* in the mainmast.

Bang!

A bullet cleaved its way through his hair, a small tuft of which floated to the deck.

It was wonderful shooting, and dreadful beyond words to see.

Mr. Hawks paused, and the cattleman shut his eyes tight, and his lips moved quickly. He was praying!

Mr. Hawks looked at him oddly a moment. It must have been many years since that cattleman had prayed, and he finished with a half-audible "Amen."

"That's it, is it?" said Mr. Hawks, quietly, and slid his revolver back into its holster. "Perhaps I have converted a sinner!"

The cattleman opened his eyes, swayed slightly, and without a word, fell with a crash to the deck in a faint.

"Underpinning give way," remarked Wilfred, coolly, in the dead silence that followed, and then returned noisily to work. And so the scene ended.

The next day all orders were carried out with a promptness that was wonderful to see. Wilfred did not improve matters by openly laughing at the hurry of the men.

"'Awks fancies 'imself as a converter of the wicked," said the little man to me, with a giggle. "'E thinks as 'ow 'e 's converted that there cattleman, 'e does, but 'e 's mistook!"

Not long after this, there happened something that concerned us all, and bade us hurry with our work.

The sun set!

It is true that the sun only remained behind the horizon for a short while — still, it set, and in doing so, gave us a profound warning.

"'The sun is gone,'" I quoted, "'until next year!'"

We had also evidence of the coming winter from the smaller streams which began to freeze from the bottom upwards, but this item Wilfred and I kept to ourselves, for it was we who discovered this further warning while on a tramp ashore.

"Freezin' 'ard," remarked Wilfred, prodding at the ice with a stick. "Christmas is coming!"

"That bottle-necked harbor is no place to

go to sleep in with the winter coming on," said I. "It would n't take much ice to block up the harbor mouth, nor much cold to freeze it tight."

"Nor is the *Effie* the kind o' 'ooker ter charge a hice pack wiv, neither," remarked Wilfred, laboring with entirely useless energy to break up the ice in the stream bed.

As this was an afternoon off duty, and my companion was deeply engaged, I sat down upon a rock and filled a pipe.

"I wonder how long we'd get along if we had to winter here," I suggested.

"M — well, should n't care ter try it," said Wilfred, thoughtfully, "though we'd be a sight better orf than them pore blokes we planted on t' other island." Then he turned with a sudden grin, "What a fine 'eap of bones you'd leave, Grummet! Some feller'd come along in years to come, an' think as 'ow 'e'd found the remains of one of these 'ere pre-'istoric men wiv a thigh bone a yard long, 'e would. An' 'e'd write to the magazines abart

it, an' 'ave 'is bloomin' portorgraph took stand-in' on the spot wheer 'e made 'is wonderful discovery! An' all the time the remains would only be the larst relic of pore little Grummet, honest, trusty, an' true, the darlin' of our crew!" and he cackled with laughter. "Mel" he added, "me, I 'd look like a starved old Brown Dorkin' after a fox 'ad finished wiv it!"

I got to my feet, and we continued our walk up the hill that rose from the top of the cliffs and, with an ever-increasing angle, sloped up towards the snow-clad peak above us. We skirted the snow line, occasionally walking through deep patches of snow, and gained a shoulder of the mountain and a fine view of the sea and sky to northward.

Both together we exclaimed aloud.

The horizon from east to west was marked by a solid line of ice.

"'Ere!" cried Wilfred, "that's 'eavier hice and more of it than what we 'ave seen before, ain't it?"

I took out a pair of prism glasses.

"That's the genuine article," said I, "a big floe and coming south, too, to judge by the sea that is running along the face of it."

"Give me the glarses," cried my companion, impatiently. "Golly, what crooked heyes you 'ave got!" he continued irritably, as he adjusted the focus, "'eavy, did you say? Yus, 'eavy it is, and no doubt abart it. Thet's the reel thing," and he swept the ice line from east to west.

"Some brash ice to east'ard, ain't there?" I asked, screwing up my eyes.

"Yus, miles of it, wiv a school of whale spoutin' along in an' abart it. All bein' driven south. I should say, whales and brash ice together. There 'll be seal an' walrush, maybe, jes' like hanimiles runnin' in front of a forest fire in Canada. I see 'em do thet oncet, and my 'at it was a sight! 'Ad to run, too, I 'ad, an' sit in a bloomin' river an' duck me 'ead hunder, and when I was out of the water I was gettin' burned, an' when I was in the water

I was gettin' drowned. 'Owever, I jes' squeaked through, but I lef' my eye-brows an' most of my 'air behind me. Thet's what 'ap-pens to yer on land — dangerous place, land — give me the sea every time, even with two 'undred odd miles of hice coming wallopin' darn lookin' for trouble."

"The promontory will protect the harbor mouth for a time," said I.

"Not fer long," remarked Wilfred, "not fer long. All that would soon pile over, an' do n't you see it takin' the old *Twin Brothers* with it? I do!"

For a time we watched the ice with dismal foreboding, then great gray patches of fog manufactured mysteriously, the way it did so often when a large field of ice was near, due to a change in the atmosphere brought about by the sudden lowering of the temperature.

"We 'd better get back to the ship," said I, "I do n't care for the chance of getting lost up here in a fog."

The discontent among the crew was not im-

proved by the fog that lasted for two days, and matters were made still worse when it lifted, for the entrance to the harbor was filling with brash ice, thick enough to make rowing hard work, while outside, the sea was one vast field of glittering white. It was a wonderful but disturbing sight, and the temperature sank to the lowest point we had yet experienced. For the time being, we were held prisoners. A battleship could have made no effect upon the ice; but Mr. Hawks took encouragement from the fact that the ice, though heavy, was moving, and its movements were accompanied by extraordinary and amazing sounds.

Up till then the constant note of the sea had been forever in our ears; beneath that great raft of ice the sea was leveled to a calm and not a ripple broke upon the outside beaches. But in place of the sound of the surf was the strange sound of the ice, grinding and tearing and crashing together. Occasionally there would be a booming, like the noise of heavy

guns, as two masses of ice, many miles square, met with inconceivable impact, and ground together.

Neither Wilfred nor myself had been so far into the Arctic before, or seen such a sight, and the little man, keyed to an acute point of interest and swathed in clothes, spent all his spare time perched on a rock, watching the ice and taking photographs with a battered camera that nevertheless possessed an irreproachable lens.

The crew, sullen, frightened, and angry, worked under pressure. Our task was nearly completed, yet some time must still pass before the high tide Mr. Hawks was counting upon was due to arrive. There were large quantities of soft coal upon the island, and the business of filling sacks with coal, then carrying the sacks down to a boat, and rowing the boat out through the brash ice in the harbor mouth to the wreck, gave the crew a fresh grievance. They said they had not shipped as coal miners. What Mr. Hawks said in

reply does not matter here, but the crew went back to their coal mining, one or two with eyes as black as the coal they disliked so much!

Provided the *Twin Brothers* was not swept from her perch by the ice, and provided she floated off successfully when the time arrived, (two problems in which there were even chances of success), her crew would need a large supply of provisions, and a good quantity of coal to keep them warm. For it is hardly necessary to point out that an iron steamer, round bottomed and barnacle covered (little did we then guess how her round bottom would save us), will not show a very fine performance under sail, even though rigged in an amazing medley of rigs. So, under the best possible conditions, the men on the *Twin Brothers* would have to face a lengthy voyage.

And our crew did not make matters easier. Instead of realizing that the sooner the work was done the better it would be, they delayed and shirked whenever they could, and if it

was possible to damage the work they had already been forced to perform, they would do so under the delusion that Mr. Hawks would grow discouraged. Now, discouragement at difficulties was not one of Mr. Hawks' failings. Opposition made him savage and dangerous and all the more determined, and once when the negro dropped a sack of coal with, I think, purposeless clumsiness overboard, Mr. Hawks planted a bullet neatly through the negro's hat with the admonition that the next time he, Mr. Hawks, would aim three inches lower. For three days and a half the negro worked well.

We put two boats on board, one containing a harpoon, lance, and line. The cabin of the wreck was cleaned out and the bunks furnished with blankets. A cooking stove was placed in the galley, and all the preparations we could furnish from the schooner were made to give those who would, or might, navigate the steamer back to civilization, the necessary comforts of life. Her rig was a subject

for much humor, and might, by a stretch of imagination, be termed that of a schooner. With a wonderful collection of strange-patterned balloon jibs, she would appear, when under sail, a veritable mariner's nightmare. But her looks would not matter as long as she moved, and provided she floated she was bound to move, but at what rate, and whether backwards or forwards or sideways, was yet to be seen.

To our carefully thought-out scheme of rigging, Wilfred raised his voice in shrill derision.

"Do n't be unkind," said I. "We have done the best we could with the ship we had and the materials on hand."

"Oh, George!" he cackled, "hevery time yer lays onto a string you 'll 'ave to give it a tug first to see what it moves, like a bloomin' yachtsman!"

In the end Wilfred proved himself a prophet.

One morning, about a week later, we were

at breakfast, when a sudden clamor of voices broke out on deck. With one spring, Mr. Hawks was up the companionway, with Peter Scott and myself behind him. As we emerged, Cert'nly Wilfred dashed out of his galley with a long-handled iron cooking pot — no ineffectual weapon — in hand, and young Green, with his hands up to his face, came staggering aft. The rest of the crew were advancing steadily, with "fight" written large all over them.

"It's mutiny!" squealed the little cook, gleefully, and dashed valiantly into the fray, saucepan in hand.

"So much for my convert!" said Mr. Hawks, bitterly, and took three bounds across the deck — *thud, thud, thud* — and arrived amongst them.

Here was real trouble, and we wasted neither time nor words. The crew was armed with belaying pins, marline spikes and a mallet. Young Green had evidently tried to warn us, had been roughly handled by the

negro, and was past any fighting for the time.

Mr. Hawks went for the cattleman with his hands, and if ever I saw "fight" in the expression of a man's back, I saw it in Mr. Hawks' that day. But my commander was deflected by one of the Germans, who aimed a swinging blow with a mallet. And then I found myself face to face with the cattleman.

We both of us were cautious, and for some reason I never reached for my gun, but took my fists to him. I hit at his jaw, and it was no fancy tap. Had he not just managed to dodge, it would have broken his neck.

Round and round we went together, banging up against the others like clumsy dancers in a ballroom. I remember that my head hit the mainmast, but I hardly noticed it at the time. Round and round we went, while the scuffle about us continued, and curiously enough, no one spoke a word.

There were only the sounds of grunts and hard breathing and the thud of blows.

Then, with a swing, I had the cattleman by the throat, and with all my force I shut off the supply of air. He fought wildly, aiming blows at my head with his clenched fist, which I had to dodge or receive as best I could, for both my hands were fully occupied. He began to stare wildly. He fought like a maniac, wildly, frantically, desperately, but I still hung to his throat. Finally I threw him from me, and he went over backward, with a great shrieking intake of breath.

So intent had I been over my affairs that I had not noticed the rest, and when I turned I found that the fight had stopped at the same moment. Mr. Hawks stood sucking his knuckles, while one of the Germans, the negro, and the fireman lay in a heap before him. His knuckles had good right to bleed.

A little beyond, Peter Scott was wringing his hand, for all the world as if he had caught his finger in a door, while the other German lay face downward from a knockout, and the middle westerner sat upon the deck, nursing

his jaw and saying various things in a tremulous undertone.

There remained only a comic scuffle between Cert'nly Wilfred and the old "salt." We were panting for breath, but we laughed between gasps as the little cockney, with a steady stream of remarks, drove the iron saucepan bonnet-wise down upon the old salt's head with such force that they both went sprawling. In a second Wilfred was up and vainly endeavoring to regain his weapon, but the cap fitted, and the little Englishman's strength was suddenly so reduced by a fit of coughing that he was forced to let go of the handle. Meanwhile, his adversary roared hollow execrations from within.

"There!" yelled Wilfred, breathless from his coughing, and dancing and fuming with rage. "I'll never be able to use that pan agin arfter your 'ead's been in it! And it's one of my own wat I paid three an' tuppence for at the Caledonian Market!"

"I guess there is n't much fight left in this

crowd," said Mr. Hawks, still sucking his knuckles, "but we must attend to young Green; he appeared to be in a bad way. If they have hurt him seriously —" said he, and paused, for young Green, still with one hand up to his face, came round the corner of the house. He pointed with his right arm.

"Schooner entering the harbor, sir!" said he.

With one accord we spun round, gaping with astonishment. So engrossed had we been that for the first time we beheld, sure enough, an auxiliary schooner yacht sweeping in with a sureness and rapidity that told us she was no stranger to the anchorage. So unexpected was her advent that we stared speechless, as if she had been an apparition. Steadily she made her way across the harbor, while we five silent men, still panting from the scuffle, hung over the bulwarks.

Her graceful lines proclaimed the yacht, but her unpainted appearance and soiled canvas suggested that she had been sold out of

commission into the commercial world. She came along grandly, shortening sail as she did so. As she neared she hailed: "What ship's that?"

Mr. Hawks made a trumpet of his hands.

"*Effie Dean*. Hawks master. Out of Frisco. What ship's that?"

But with total disregard of the etiquette of the sea, the stranger made no reply, and with great smartness, that told of a full complement of well-trained hands, she dropped anchor. Almost instantly a boat was lowered from her side, manned, and came toward us. In the stern sat a thick-set little man with a scarlet muffler. He clambered actively up and stood smiling among us, alert, rubicund, with a beet-red face and closely placed steel-blue eyes. With skilled observation he picked out Mr. Hawks.

"Good morning, Cap'n," said he, in friendly tone. "I am Captain Protheroe."

And for the first time in my life I saw Mr. Hawks wholly at a loss.

CHAPTER XI

THERE are, I think, few men who can stand calmly by and see themselves ruined with an unmoved countenance. The sudden appearance of the stranger announcing himself as Captain Protheroe seemed to bring all of Mr. Hawks' schemes tumbling down like a house of cards in one minute.

How the legal aspect of the affair looked I did not know; neither, I think, did Mr. Hawks. Captain Protheroe's death had been established by the sworn statements of seven eyewitnesses; and after the usual legal delays, his brother, as sole executor, had come into the late captain's property, which included the wreck of the sealer and all inside her.

The purchase of the ship had been effected by Mr. Hawks; and after the expense of chartering the schooner and voyaging over four

thousand miles, he had discovered that the most valuable portion of his purchase, namely, the cargo of sealskins, had been stolen beyond all hope of recovery. This left only the slim chance of salving the wreck itself to repay him for his heavy outlay, and now this last chance might be snatched away from him.

That is how the affair looked to me that morning as the little red-faced man smilingly announced himself as Captain Protheroe.

"Well! Well!" exclaimed Mr. Hawks, with sudden affability, advancing with his hand outstretched. "You are supposed to be dead, Captain. But come below and let us talk this matter out, for I have bought the wreck of your ship."

"So I guessed, Cap'n," replied the stranger, apparently anxious not to be outdone in politeness. "I noticed your salving operations as I came by. But we can talk on deck."

I could not resist a glance at Wilfred; it was so obvious why the stranger was unwilling to go below. Then looking over the side into

the boat, I saw that "Captain Protheroe's" place had been taken by an alert young man, who gazed steadily and gravely up at us, while on the thwart at his side rested a repeating rifle. Mr. Hawks' eye followed mine, and he turned again to our visitor.

"No, no, Captain. I am not as inhospitable as all that! And may I ask, Captain, do you usually carry arms when paying calls?"

"Oh, no!" laughed the man who called himself Protheroe, and added glibly, "That is my young mate. He has a mania for potting at anything with that little gun of his, and he thought he might get a chance at some of the birds while I was aboard here."

"Really?" said Mr. Hawks, and his grin was not a pleasant one.

"But come, Captain," he continued. "Though we have just had a little unpleasantness with the crew, our cook is all right, and we rather pride ourselves on his cooking. You must come below and have some breakfast."

"You are very kind," answered the visitor. Then he glanced over into his boat, and exchanged a slight nod with the alert young man, who rose from his place in the stern. As Mr. Hawks and Captain Protheroe descended to the cabin, he climbed quickly to our deck, bringing his rifle with him.

The part of host now fell to me.

"Good morning, Mr. Mate!" said I, cordially, for I had got my cue from Mr. Hawks.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Mate!" replied the young man, with equal politeness.

"Mr. Scott," said I, turning to the second mate, "just see to those men, will you? They will need a little sticking plaster. We have had," said I, turning to the young man, "a little friction with our crew."

"Just so," he answered, with an understanding nod.

Despite his rough seafaring clothes, there was about him an air of elegance that somehow marked the gentleman. He was quite young, with a curious frankness of expression


that I yet knew to be a mask. He was frank without being communicative; smiling without being friendly; alert without being restless; and his left eye, half-closed, seemed to suggest that at one time he had worn a monocle. He was very English, with a certain ease of manner that would suit all occasions, and I was certain that although young, he was no fool. Every instinct within me cried out in warning against this cool young man.

"I fear," said he, with a drawl, "that Captain Protheroe's arrival is a bit inopportune!"

"O dear, no," I replied, smiling. "I do n't suppose Captain Hawks will alter his plans."

"Captain Protheroe might, perhaps, save him that trouble," suggested the young man, smiling openly.

"I hardly think that is likely," I answered, in the most friendly fashion possible, "but it is certainly a grand old muddle. How is it that your Captain Protheroe was not drowned when he wrecked his ship? Seven people have all sworn that they saw him die."



"I can't say that I know the details," he replied, leaning negligently against the bulwarks, completely at his ease, "but I understand that the crew of the *Twin Brothers* got away in two boats, and were separated. The one with the captain and mate was picked up by a Jap sealer, and came on down, eventually to Fukuyama. The captain, I understand, immediately cabled his safe arrival, but that must have been after you left Frisco. He then fitted out the schooner and came along to save his ship. Simple enough."

"Not hearing in the meantime that she had been sold," said I, laughing at his statement, of which I did not believe a word.

"Apparently not, or why should he come here?" said the young man, smiling carelessly at my laughter.

"But," said I, "the *Twin Brothers* was lost nearly a year ago. Captain Protheroe was a long time cabling!"

"Yes, was n't he?" said the visitor, with another smile. "Most unbusinesslike."

"You," thought I, "are the most accomplished liar I have ever met!"

"Then you are out of Fukuyama?" I asked, aloud.

"Hongkong, I believe, was our port of departure."

"Captain Protheroe must have some good friends to enable him to fit out a schooner and sail about twelve thousand miles on the off chance of a profit at the end of it."

"Yes, indeed, that is what I always think," the young man answered.

During our conversation my ears were wide open for any sound from the cabin or forecastle. The situation was precarious, and I was growing fairly sure that our visitor was no more Captain Protheroe than I was. We were two dogs about to quarrel over a bone, and although Mr. Hawks had a right to the bone, it would probably go to the stronger dog, and I wondered which would spring first.

The young man and I chatted pleasantly

enough, each telling the other nothing of importance; but all the time I was reviewing the situation. I decided that if the luck went against us, it would not take our mutineers long to join the enemy. And in that case Mr. Hawks, Peter Scott, "Cert'nly" Wilfred, young Green, and I would have a hard task before us.

Meanwhile great sounds of activity and industry issued from the galley behind us, where Wilfred was busy preparing another breakfast. A pleasant smell of frying bacon pervaded the deck, and for once the cook was not singing. Peter Scott came and reported that the mutineers were bathing their wounds and feeling sorry for themselves.

It was an intolerable morning, and I would willingly have given a month's pay to know what was going on in the cabin. Anything was possible. Mr. Hawks was not the man to allow his property to be taken away from him, and our visitor, I was sure, was not the man to go away empty handed. At any mo-

ment I expected to hear the bang of a revolver. Whether Mr. Hawks would shoot our visitor or our visitor shoot Mr. Hawks was a debatable point, but I felt confidence in Mr. Hawks. If any shooting occurred, how would the young man and the boat's crew and the crew of our ship behave? These were questions for which I could find no answer, and meanwhile our conversation gradually ceased, and we remained furtively watching each other.

Then, after what seemed hours, voices came from the companion, and we beheld Mr. Hawks and his guest apparently upon the best of terms. They went to the side, and shook hands.

"Well," said Mr. Hawks, "so long, Captain!" and with a nod to me, Captain Protheroe, followed by his young mate, descended to the boat and shoved off from the schooner's side with a friendly wave of the arm.

"Come below, Grummet," said Mr. Hawks. "Mr. Scott, keep the deck."

We sat down before the débris of breakfast.

"Now, then, Grummet," said he, with brisk cheerfulness, "what's all this?"

"You know more than I, sir," said I. "I could n't get anything worth a cent out of that young man. But I'll wager that the man is not old Protheroe."

"So will I, Grummet, so will I. But who is he? Why does he pretend to be Protheroe? And — what does he want?"

"He wants the cargo of sealskins, sir," said I, with a chuckle.

"No, he does n't! That's the rub! When I told him about their having been stolen, for he can see for himself that I have n't got 'em, he never turned a hair! When I showed him my papers, he piped up, 'All right, captain, guess you're owner clear enough. I'd like to go and have a look at my old ship once more, if you do n't mind.' Of course I said I did n't. He can't walk off with the wreck in his trousers pocket. Do you think a man would give up as easy as all that, after sailing

from Japan? No, sir, not by a jugful! Then what is he after?"

"I thought," said I, "that the days of pirates were over."

"We live and learn, Grummet."

With a sudden crack, I brought my fist down on my knee.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Hawks.

"I felt sure that I had seen that man with the red muffler before, sir," said I.

"Well, where?"

"On the street car in Frisco, before we left. D'you remember, sir, I told you about hearing them speak of the *Twin Brothers*?"

"By gum — so you did, Grummet, so you did! Now, what in thunder does it all mean?" and he rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Only goes to prove that my suspicions are correct. This man ain't Protheroe, but he's a tough citizen, and his crowd are as tough as he. Grummet, we are in a tight place."

"Never having been in a tight place before, sir, eh?" I said, and grinned.

"I've a notion this is tighter than anything we have struck before," he remarked thoughtfully, "though I admit that's saying a good deal. What did you make of that young man with the rifle? What was he like?"

"An Englishman, sir. I should think that he was a face card once, rather a swell, well-born, I mean — a hard case, sir; an uncommonly hard case, but very much alive and the best liar I have met for some time, sir."

"This man who calls himself Protheroe would have an able assistant, trust him to that!" remarked Mr. Hawks.

A step sounded upon the companionway, and Wilfred arrived with a tray to collect the breakfast things. He glanced up, and seeing that we were alone, he asked, "Oo 's 'e?"

"Ask me another," said Mr. Hawks, drumming his fingers upon the table. "What d' you think?"

"Think? Well, 'e ain't Protheroe. 'E did n't come arfter the sealskins; 'e ain't arfter the wreck. Therefore, since two and two

makes four, generally speaking, 'e's arfter somethink helse. Some bloomin' thing wot's in the wreck and which we do n't know nothink about. If you arsk me, I should say as 'ow it's pearls."

"Maybe," said Mr. Hawks. "The question then is, Where are the pearls?"

"Ah," said Wilfred, collecting his plates and dishes, "yes, indeed, where are the pearls? Who 'as got the pearls? Oh, I do n't think this little man calling 'imself Protheroe will find 'em, do you?"

"I do n't know," said Mr. Hawks, slowly, and rising, he strode up the companionway.

"Why won't he find them?" I asked.

"'Cos 'Awks 'as got 'em, fat 'ead."

"D' you remember that man I told you of on the street car in Frisco?" I asked.

"Glory be. That 'im?"

I nodded.

"My word, there's a time coming and no mistakel" said Wilfred with great relish, "it'll be about five against thirty odd."

"H-m, sounds cheering," said I.

"It *is* cheering," answered the little man quickly, "I tell yer, Grummet, wot with our mutineers an' this fresh crowd all against 'Awks, an' you, an' Scott, an' me, an' young Green, there 's goin' to be the greatest, grandest, liveliest old mix-up you ever did see, and me — I, Sutinly Wilfred, is right in it!"

He stood back, a narrow-chested, frail, undersized little man, a comic gallant figure, and regarded the future with fierce joy.

"You are not a peace-at-any-price person," said I, smiling.

"I 'm peaceable when hothers is peaceable, mild as milk, as tame as a bird in a gilded cage, I am. But there is sompthink called righteous wrath, an' I kin git rorty when me or my friends is unduly put upon. An' why not, I arks yer? Turnin' the other cheek is all right at times, but speakin' personally, when I 'm smited I smite — it's good fer the other feller's soul, but wheer it's most good is in savin' a lot of misunderstandin'."

"Grummet," called Mr. Hawks, down the companionway, "I'm going aboard the wreck!"

Wilfred spun round. "Now what in wonder is 'e going to do that for?" cried the little man. "They'll try and kill 'im, sure!"

"It proves that he has n't got them," said I. "Yes, sir!" and I ran up the stairs.

"Where's young Green?" asked Mr. Hawks, when I was at his side.

"Here, sir," answered the boy.

"Let me look at that head of yours," said Mr. Hawks, lifting the bandage which ran across the young man's face, and which by its neatness spoke of Peter Scott's workmanship.

"It's only a flesh wound, sir," said Green.

"Feel well enough to row out to the wreck?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Very well, then, get down into the dinghy. I would n't take you if I could take anyone else I could trust." Young Green drew himself up very straight. "So you it will be."

Then turning to me, Mr. Hawks added, "I would take Peter Scott, only you may need him, Grummet. That crowd forward won't be in any too sweet a temper. If there is any trouble, do as you think best. Shoot if necessary, and I will accept all responsibility. I do n't like leaving the ship while things are like this, but I must find out what they're after. Remember that we have to sail this hooker, but we can't do so too short-handed. You see, I know you," and he grinned at me.

"All right, sir," I replied, "but you are doing a risky thing. You are in their way. On the wreck you will be one against many. They will shoot you if they get the ghost of a chance, sir."

"They may try, Grummet, but I do n't generally go round in charge of a nursemaid. Do n't on any account whatever allow anyone from the other schooner aboard here." He turned and was about to descend to the dinghy, where young Green was already seated, holding on with a boat hook.

"I've half a mind not to let you go, sir," said I.

"What!" he exclaimed, spinning round with astonishment.

"I said, sir, that I had half a mind not to let you go," I repeated stolidly. "They can't do anything with the wreck, so what good can you do by going?"

"I want to find out, if I can, what they are after. But, Grummet," and he smiled gravely at me, "this sounds mutinous."

"If keeping an eye on 'em is all you are going to do, sir, I can do that just as well as you can, and, begging your pardon, sir, you are married and I am not. So I'll go and you'll stay!"

"'Ooray!" sang out the cockney, who had come up the companionway with a loaded tray. "Two to one on Grummet!"

"Shut your head!" I said angrily.

"Choke yourself!" cried the little man, putting the tray down upon the hatch and assuming an elaborate posture of mock attack.

"Come on, you gryte big, 'ulking — There 'e goes! Stop 'im!"

I turned in time to see Mr. Hawks in the act of stepping to the side, and in defiance of all the laws of the sea, I charged my superior officer and sent him staggering aside. The next moment I was in the dinghy.

"Get out of this!" said I to young Green, and he was out of the dinghy and on deck in the twinkling of an eye, with a frightened face. I drew out from the schooner's side, and Mr. Hawks, flanked upon either side by young Green and Cert'nly Wilfred, leaned over the bulwarks.

"Grummet," said Mr. Hawks, quietly.

"Yes, sir."

"You have laid violent hands upon your superior officer."

"Yes, sir."

"I have the right to shoot you as you sit there, or put you in irons."

"Yes, sir."

"You are a mutineer."

"I am, sir."

"Go, then. You are the only man for fifteen years that has either dared or been able to hustle me about."

"Good-by, sir," I answered, smiling at him, and then I nodded to Wilfred.

"So long, old sport!" remarked the little Englishman. "I'll lay violets on your gryve, if we ever find your corpse," and he gave me a toothless grin, and struck up: "Good-by for ever —" with a wealth of mock sentiment.

The day was fine and, for those latitudes at that season, warm, with a long, heavy swell from the north and east. Captain Protheroe, his men and his boat were by now out of sight, so I bent my back and the oars, and fairly lifted the dinghy through the water. But I had to use some caution, once I was outside the harbor, for the swell was running high, and was a sight to see as it roared and spouted up on the promontory and the sand-banks that were scattered about the harbor entrance.

But the tide was going down, and every

hour would uncover more sand, and thus give more shelter. I was glad of this, for it was possible that my departure from the wreck might be hurried.

I was soon in sight of the end of the promontory and the wreck itself, and in a little while I was able to see that the newcomer had left no one in charge of his boat, and in twenty minutes more I was ashore.

I drew the dinghy up and made for the great rust-streaked hull, and still saw no one. I clambered over the rocks, my gun mighty handy all the time, and then climbed the ladder we had left, and still saw no one. The quietness was rather trying to the nerves of one who was expecting an attack, and when I reached the deck, I looked about me quickly. Then, as I crept aft, I heard the murmur of voices from the charthouse. I crept nearer and paused. One door of the charthouse was shut and locked, as Wilfred remarked when we visited the wreck together; the other was open, and by this I took my stand. As I lis-

tened, I drew my revolver, for two minutes — less, even — told me that my presence would not be welcomed by those inside.

The drone of the surf came softly, for the tide was a long way out, and the air, for once mild, was rank with the smell of rotting seaweed. A gentle wind hummed in our improvised funnel stays, and in a patch of sunlight a multitude of midges swarmed and curled like smoke. I could hear my watch ticking in my pocket, and the steady *drip-drip-drip* from somewhere in the hull beneath me.

"I'm pretty sure that he had 'em here," said a voice from inside the charthouse.

"Behind this paneling, I think," and I recognized the voice of the alleged Captain Protheroe.

The next remark was illuminating.

"He was a smart old skunk, was Protheroe. I bet he put them where they will need some finding."

"Well, we are going to find 'em, too."

"Yes, before that man Hawks tries to get

her off the rocks. It makes me laugh to think of him and his crowd working all this time to float her. Why, she might have cruised round for years without any one finding what was inside her!"

"Hurry up," said the voice of the pretended Protheroe, "or we shall have that fool from the *Effie Dean* butting in."

"I do n't think he is any kind of a fool," said the voice of the young man I had talked to but an hour before. "D'you know, he struck me as rather wide-awake. His mate, also, is as hard as nails! I would n't care to try conclusions with him unless I had the drop on him, do n't you know."

I grinned and examined my revolver.

"Here's a hollow place," said someone, rat-tapping diligently.

"Got the drill? Well, go ahead, get a move on you. We ought to have set a watch."

"But what gets me is this," said another voice. "Why should Protheroe have built 'em into his ship? Surely he would have got

some little secret spring working somewhere so that he could get 'em in a hurry without having to tear his ship to bits."

"Well, my son, and who in thunder says he had n't got a secret spring? But have we time to look for it? Got the hammer, George?"

"Perhaps he did get 'em, and they are in his pocket now, or inside a fish."

Suddenly a gull alighted with a great flutter of wings on the rail opposite the open door, and I started violently.

"What's that?" cried someone, quickly.

I raised my revolver!

CHAPTER XII

I SLIPPED quietly and quickly around the corner of the charthouse; for when it is six to one, and you happen to be the one, discretion is undoubtedly the better part of valor. I was able to move without a sound, since I was wearing rubber-soled boots at the time.

Once around the corner, I paused, listening to the clatter of heavy boots upon the iron plating, and wondering which corner they would come round. It was very like playing tag, but I did not enjoy it.

"Only that bird, you galoot!" I heard someone say, in a reassuring voice; and then, after a moment, I heard them troop back into the charthouse. I drew a long breath.

And my curiosity was now so thoroughly aroused that stay I must and see it out. I will admit that eavesdropping is not a pretty game

to play, but there are times when it is necessary to play it, and this was just such a time.

It was evident that they were confident of finding whatever it was that they were looking for; also, that the thing they were looking for was of considerable value. And at any rate, I knew one thing: the captain of the strange schooner was not Captain Protheroe. So whatever they found undoubtedly belonged to Mr. Hawks, and I was there to protect my commander's interests.

Although they were six, and I but one, certain advantages lay in my favour. To begin with, they did not know that I was there, and they were cooped up in a small iron chart house. I calculated how long it would take those six busy men, all in each other's way, to draw their guns and shoot, if I were to appear suddenly in the doorway and open fire upon them. Had Wilfred been with me, I think we could have slammed the door to and locked them in; that would have been grand; but I could not do it alone. They would have at

once raced down the stairway, and have reached the foot of it long before I could arrive there to hold them up, one by one, as they came down. I regretted that the little cockney was not with me! The game would have appealed to Cert'nly Wilfred!

But I was alone, so I had to be cautious. I waited, and from the sounds it seemed as if they were stripping the paneling off the walls without success.

"It's no good," said the voice of the pretended Captain Protheroe, as he or someone else slammed down a hammer angrily. "They're not in this charthouse, wherever they are. Let's take a look below."

Then, as I heard them stumbling down the stairway, it struck me that I had better retreat toward the dinghy, for they might pop up anywhere, and I should not hear them coming. So I slipped silently across the deck, and after a scramble, I regained my boat. I rowed hard, recollecting that those left upon the other schooner would inform the boat

party, when they returned, that they had been followed by one man in a dinghy from the *Effie Dean*. So I did not pause until I was alongside. All seemed quiet. Mr. Hawks was in the cabin. Peter Scott was in charge of the deck, and Wilfred, just as I arrived, was emptying a pail of potato peelings over the side.

"'Ullo," said the little man, perkily, "'ere 's pore Grummet's ghost!" Then, as I reached the deck, he asked, in a quiet voice, "See or 'ear anythink, Percival?"

"They are after pearls, I think, and they may find 'em before we do."

"Just so."

I gave Mr. Hawks an account of all that I had seen and heard.

"It's obviously pearls, sir," said I, and sat back in silence.

"It's obviously something valuable, and not sealskins," said he, thoughtfully. "But apart from that, I do n't see why I should let 'em go and tear my ship to bits." After a lit-

tle he looked up. "I wish that high tide would come along, she is all ready, and I am sick of this island, and all these doubts. We have patched her hull, bailed her dry, rigged a jury foremast, rigged her and bent sails, carried out a stern warp, victualled her, put water aboard, coal and a stove—she is all ready for the salving crew to go aboard with their blankets and a navigating officer with a compass and his sextant—you, Grummet—if she will condescend to float."

"It's a week, yet, is n't it, sir?"

"A week today. But we must decide what to do with this piratical crowd. Once things start going against us, can't you see our lovely crew shipping in with the enemy? As things are, I do n't see how a row is to be avoided. It stands to reason that I can't sit here and let them play tag with you on my ship, and tear her inside out. If they find what they are after this morning—well, whatever it is, it belongs to me, and there is a fresh complication—how to get it from them! Anyway, we

will go and have a look for ourselves this evening, after dark, and if we do n't find a pot of money, or a treasure chest, or whatever the fool thing is, we will go across and present a little bill for paneling," and he grinned at me.

"What they are after, sir, is worth something."

"Yes, old Protheroe's pile — sounds like a dime novel, Grummet."

"Captain Protheroe's fortune would sound better, sir," said I, laughing, "but the difficulty about tonight is leaving the ship."

"I know it is," said Mr. Hawks. "You and I will have to go, that is certain. That means that we leave Scott in command here. But as it is more than probable that the crowd from the other schooner will have another search tonight, that is, if they do n't find what they are after this morning, we can pretty well count on a hard scrap. That means we must have someone else with us. The question then is, Who is it to be? Young Green is faithful enough, and strong enough, but he

lacks experience, and might get rattled in a hard scrap, and I do n't suppose he can shoot worth anything. So it will have to be the cockney — I should have liked to leave him here to help Scott, for Peter may have his hands full."

"He has no strength for a rough-and-tumble," said I, "but it won't be a rough-and-tumble; it'll be shooting; and that man is a dandy shot, and has the grit of a dozen."

"He does n't know what fear is," said Mr. Hawks. "That is, he may know what it is, but I've never yet seen him show any, and we have been in some stiff places, Grummet, you and I and that little man."

For the rest of that day no boat left either the *Effie Dean* or the *Electra*, as we read the stranger's name to be. Beyond two men slung over the side, painting, our friends showed no signs of life, for the boat containing the party that had visited the wreck had long since returned to their ship. Peter Scott was given his instructions, which he received in

his usual stolid manner, but even he, I think, would have expressed some surprise had he known how long it would be before we met again.

Young Green was called aft, and much to his delight, was created third mate by Mr. Hawks. He removed his belongings at once, and was permanently established in the cabin, for his life was no longer safe in the fore-castle. He was addressed at once, with some care, as "Mr. Green" by Mr. Hawks, Peter Scott, and myself; Wilfred called him "Mr. Green Green."

As night fell, we said good-by, and Mr. Hawks, Cert'nly Wilfred, and I dropped quietly into a boat and pushed off from the old *Effie Dean*. Had we known all that was to follow, our leave-taking might have been different.

Mr. Hawks and I took the oars. Wrapped in cotton waste, the rowlocks betrayed no sound, and silently we rowed through the night toward the harbor mouth. Here we

found the seas running high, and in the strong wind that began to catch us once we were away from the shelter of the cliffs, we found keeping afloat no very easy job.

One minute we would be at the bottom of a long, dark valley, with a great wall of water, black as ebony, descending upon us; the next we would be poised upon the giddy summit of a range of hills, and then we would go swinging down in the liveliest fashion.

"What do you make of this kind of traveling, Grummet?" said Mr. Hawks.

"If this 'ere goes on much longer," said Wilfred, out of the darkness of the stern, "I, Wilfred Gee, more commonly known as Cert'nly Wilfred, will be seasick."

"I'm beginning to feel a bit turned myself," said I. "How do you feel, sir?"

"All right, so far, but I'll admit that I could n't stand much of it. A lively ship is all right, but a small boat that tries to fly is different. The barometer is tumbling, too; I guess we are in for some kind of gale."

To find the landing place was our next difficulty, and we spent half an hour of acute anxiety lying off and on, "waiting for a smooth." To have made a mistake and run into the wrong place would have meant the quick drowning of us all; and owing to the roar of the surf, we could hardly make each other hear.

Then, more by instinct than by anything else, Mr. Hawks gave orders, and we pulled into the raging turmoil. A moment of suspense and hard work followed, and suddenly we found ourselves in calmer water. Then the boat grounded upon the little stretch of gravelly beach. We landed soaked to the skin, and hauled the boat, as we thought, into safety. The question now in our minds was whether the others were before us.

We might expect anything, and I, for one, when I reached the rail, slid over quickly, with my arm raised in protection. We clambered aft, no light showing anywhere. Owing to the noise of the sea, our enemy might have

been there in regiments, and have all shouted together, for all that we could have heard.

But the wreck was dark and deserted, and at that hour, in those conditions, seemed doubly weird and strange. She seemed in some way thrilled with the lives she had lost, trembling with the recollection of the crimes that had been committed upon her; or was it only the screaming sea that raced up every now and again past her keel?

We left Wilfred on guard, and entered the charthouse, where Mr. Hawks turned on his electric torch. The place was littered with broken paneling. We finished the work the pirates had begun, and in five minutes the charthouse was bare to its iron walls, and nothing rewarded our search. Then we pitched the débris out on deck and minutely examined the flooring, but no trace of a place of concealment could we find.

"I wish that we knew what we were looking for," said Mr. Hawks, in a worried voice; then he added, "What a row that sea is mak-

ing tonight! I never heard it sound so near the wreck before."

"Well, sir, whatever old Protheroe's fortune was or is, it is n't in this charthouse.

"It does n't look like it, Grummet. I wonder if that boat of ours is safe? The tide seems higher tonight than I have ever known it before."

He turned and glanced out of the door into the black, stormy night.

"Go and see how Wilfred is getting on."

I stepped out and found the little man where we had left him, wide-awake, and very much on the alert. We had to put our heads close together and shout, and as we spoke, a sudden, startling shower of stinging spray came out of the darkness. "'Ere! You come on guard 'ere, an' lemme go!" he yelled.

"I can't, Wilfred. Orders are orders."

"Well, 'ere — wot's the matter with this 'ere perishing sea? Jes' 'ark at the bloomin' row it's kicking up. Tide seems 'igher than wot I 'ave ever seen it before."

"I know it does!" I shouted back. You all right?"

"Yes, but this 'ere sea is a puzzler. Once your eyes get accustomed to the dark, you can see some of the bigger seas sweeping right parst us. It never done that before!"

"Gale blowing up from the nor'ard, too," said I. "Well, so long!" and I left him.

"We'll try the stairway now," said Mr. Hawks. "It makes me mad to think of all the time we have been monkeying around this wreck, and perhaps there is a nice, fat little nest egg tucked away right under our noses, and only waiting to be found."

"Maybe the pirates, as you call them, sir, got it this morning," I suggested.

"I do n't think that they can have done it, or they would have up-anchored and cleared. They must know that sooner or later I'll find how they have been tearing my ship to pieces. My! Listen to that sea!"

"But how did they know about it, sir?" I asked, examining each step under his torch.

"Probably this man who called himself Protheroe was the mate of this boat, and had somehow got to know the old man had some kind of treasure aboard, and was only biding his time." He tapped the thick iron rail that ran down one side of the stairway.

Suddenly Wilfred, dripping wet, appeared. He wasted no words.

"You 'ave made a mistake in your 'rithmetic, you 'ave," said he, wringing some sea water out of his long black hair. "That there pertic'ler 'igh tide is comin' tonight, it is."

As he finished, the *Twin Brothers* gave a slight although distinct shudder, and Mr. Hawks' jaw dropped.

"There," said Wilfred, placidly continuing to wring the water out of his hair and clothing, "she'll move orf tonight."

We looked at one another grimly for a moment, and then we stumbled out on deck.

Mr. Hawks opened his mouth to speak, but there are times when the English language is entirely inadequate.

The wind was freshening to a gale, and sea after sea came crashing down about the wreck. Gradually, as our eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, we saw that already the short night was passing, and that a faint gray tinge marked the east. Then we saw those great ridges of water advancing steadily upon us, and although at times the rocks round about us were bare and dripping, they were, for the most part, covered with acres of snow-white surf streaming across them like a mill race.

"Our boat!" I cried.

"Gone to Aden by now!" growled Mr. Hawks, and then, having found his voice, he spoke what was in his mind.

It was mostly self-accusation. He called himself every fool under the sky, and this publicly before us, his subordinates. I made no sign, but Wilfred gravely winked at me in the gray cold gloom.

The savage sound of the sea was louder, for the tide seemed to be racing up. It filled the universe with threatening roar, it encom-

passed us upon all sides with cold, remorseless power, and the wind cut like a knife. We realized its power, and we realized our own helplessness; we were trapped as completely as children at the seaside, and we were as weak. We had known all along that should a gale spring up during our endeavor to float the *Twin Brothers* it would do away in one short hour with all our hopes of salvage.

Again the wreck shuddered, and, so I thought, lifted herself slightly. Whatever doubts Mr. Hawks had were, by this, completely set aside. We had not realized, even when we landed, how high the tide was, owing to the darkness; but now, as I have said, the night was beginning to thin. The wind, steadily increasing, whipped on the tormented sea, and screaming like a thousand voices, sounded above the crashing of the waves. There was nothing to be said, nothing to be done, and the wreck heaved herself once more, and this time fell with a metallic clang that we could hear above the noise of the gale.

"That's it!" shouted Mr. Hawks. "I've made a mistake somewhere. That tide is coming now, backed up and hurried along by the wind. Oh—" He paused in search of a word, but could find nothing to suit him.

In the dim, pale light, we looked out across those endless miles of raging sea. In one place it was sweeping clear over the promontory, and about us it was already deep water. Then a sea, greater than the rest, raced up, and in an avalanche of water, fell roaring into the waist. Another followed, then another, and each time the *Twin Brothers* wriggled like a thing in pain.

A sudden sheet of spray came hammering down, drenching us anew, and as we wiped the salt water out of our eyes, we saw a huge wave, a great mountain of water, descending upon us. It only needed half a glance to tell us that the sea would sweep the ship from stern to stern.

"That one'll do for us!" shouted Mr. Hawks. "Inside the charthouse, quick!"

It was a slim, bare chance, and once inside, I hooked my arm through one of the open ports. With a sound like thunder that sea broke. As it roared aft, I saw Mr. Hawks struggling to shut the door; but the heavy iron hook that held the door back had rusted into the staple, and he could not manage it.

He had barely time to jump for a sure hold before that sea came past, six feet deep, like a mill race. It filled the charthouse in three seconds, and my body was washed about like a rag. A soft, light substance passed me, and with my free arm I grabbed at it.

Then for an incredible time my head was beneath the water, and my pulse drummed in my ears like a machine. My body was tossed and twisted about, and my life was strained almost to the breaking point.

Then with a great gasp, I found my head above water.

I drew the bundle in my arms against me as the water streamed out, and I found I was holding the limp, undersized body of Cert'nly

Wilfred, wrapped like a rag doll about my arm.

Dimly, by the light that marked the doorway, I saw Mr. Hawks heave himself up. "Grummet?" he called, hoarsely.

"Aye, aye, sir?"

"Where's the cockney?"

"I've got him, sir, but I'm afraid he's dead."

"Into the stern, quick." Together we ran aft to what shelter we could find, as the wreck ground upon the rocks, that must inevitably pound her to pieces. Between us we carried Wilfred's body. Mr. Hawks peered into his face. "Gone!" said he, shortly.

CHAPTER XIII

ALREADY the short night was passing; already the wan, cold, gray daylight was revealing the details of our surroundings. The wreck, plastered white with salt spray, still clung to the rocks, her forward part in a smother of foam. Mr. Hawks and I, soaked and battered-looking, numb with cold, peered into Wilfred's thin, drawn, yellow-white face. His sodden clothes clung to his undersized body, and a gaping cut, suspiciously dry of blood, ran over one eye.

At any moment the wreck might break her back and split in two, and her stern slip off into the water, carrying us with it; or the entire ship might be swept by a larger wave than its fellows. The gale seemed on the increase, and our hours of life were apparently numbered. Yet I noted that the *Twin Brothers* still lifted to the bigger seas. If she

was making water she could not be taking in much, for her buoyancy was unimpaired.

Then suddenly Wilfred coughed!

At once we set to work moving his arms and expanding his narrow chest. It seemed rather futile, I thought at the time, for we all three were bound to drown. Yet we worked while all round us roared and trumpeted that great impersonal tempest.

"'Ere!" protested a feeble voice, as welcome as the flowers in May. "Leave my harms alone, carn't you? Am near dead as 'tis. D'ye want to finish me orf?"

"Thought you were dead!" bellowed Mr. Hawks.

"Well, I hain't," was the irritable reply, and for some time we huddled together for mutual warmth and protection.

I must point out here — what few landmen realize — the exhaustion brought on by exposure. If a man can keep comparatively warm and comparatively dry, with some food in his stomach, he can resist a great deal. But

after a certain number of hours of being continually drenched with cold sea, during which time all food has gone from his stomach, he finds at last that he is unable to create the animal heat necessary to sustain life. Although it was not piercingly cold on the wreck, the wind and the immersion in cold water repeated at frequent intervals hour after hour were beginning to tell on even Mr. Hawks and myself, and we were neither of us what might be termed delicate. How it was that Wilfred lived at all I do not know. We lay half on top of him, which gave him some warmth, but his life flickered like a candle flame.

After an indefinite time, I propped myself up on my elbow and took a look round. As we lay in the shelter of the deckhouse, we were saved from the worst of the wind and seas. But the air was full of flying spray, and it came stinging down upon us in sheets as we lay covering our faces with our arms.

To a ship under sail, such a sea and such a

gale would have been but an ordinary occurrence, and would have been logged as: "Heavy gale from the N.N.E. Big sea, etc.," followed by a note of the canvas set. But to us, grinding upon the rocks, and held remorselessly to face it all, without the merciful yielding of a ship at liberty to move, it was a very different matter.

A ship's whole existence is a compromise, a yielding resistance against seas that are too heavy and winds that blow too strong. Only the very stoutest works of man can stand immovable in the eye of a tempest, and the shattered and twisted hull of the *Twin Brothers* seemed hardly more considerable than a bird cage.

The seas swept down upon us out of the north, and very little of the promontory was visible. Only here and there a jagged, glistening peak of rock lifted its head above the acres of surf, and it seemed to me that each successive heave of the wreck was shifting us before that onslaught of water. The same

thought had come to Mr. Hawks, and together we watched our fate. I can see him now, his bronzed face streaming with salt water, which he now and again wiped out of his red-rimmed eyes with the knuckles of his fist.

Gradually, and I was afraid to trust my senses, the laboring of the *Twin Brothers* became noticeably less. She seemed to have swung round, and now faced the sea with her clean-cut bows. Mr. Hawks and I looked at each other without speaking. I have endeavored to make clear for you the ship's position, and the lay of the rock. You will see that by a particularly good fortune, she was bearing the brunt of the seas upon her quarter, and furthermore, that there was a large rock just in the right spot, to take the full force of the seas. The sand banks also added a protection, although one of them was just awash at ordinary high tide.

But during this abnormal tide, this sand bank was well covered, and thus, after a time, afforded us no further shelter. You will note

the difference of the current at high water and at low, all of which played its part in what happened to us on that extraordinary day. So the higher the tide got, the stronger grew the current to sweep us off along the broken line upon the map. When at last I thought the very promontory itself would be uprooted, the inconceivable took place.

This was about twenty hours after we had boarded the wreck, during which time the tide had fallen once to about ordinary high-tide line, and then returned higher than ever.

At first I could not believe my eyes, for I saw two points of rock change their positions! Mr. Hawks was also staring at those points of rock, and as we watched, they swung right round, and the *Twin Brothers* took a gigantic, free, unchecked roll, and the sea and wind became suddenly less.

Then Mr. Hawks bounded to his feet.

"She's off! She's off! She's off!" he shouted, waving his arms about in the air.

"But now she'll sink!" screamed Wilfred.

"'Er bottom must be stove — must be, I tell ye!"

With one accord we raced and clambered to the bridge. Already the promontory had faded in the haze, as the *Twin Brothers*, rolling and pitching in great sweeps, drove to leeward like a straw hat. We stood shouting incoherently at one another, and waved our arms about in our excitement as we waited to feel her sinking beneath our feet. But she did not!

We waited breathlessly, yet the ship rode high. Suddenly, with a high, throaty crow that was half-cough and half-jeer at himself, Cert'nly Wilfred collapsed in a little wet heap. We carried the little man into shelter, and arranged him as best we could, and then again went out on the deck.

There was a lot of water in the *Twin Brothers*, slopping about at every roll, but although she was leaking a bit, most of the water had come from above. But to save her from being swamped, it was necessary to get

some sail on her, and this we did, Mr. Hawks and I, and then slept where we fell.

My next sensation was the unutterable joy of warmth, and for a time I lay with my eyes shut in quiet ecstasy. When I opened them, it was to behold the sun, low down in the horizon, it is true, but nevertheless the sun! I sat up and saw Mr. Hawks upon a locker; and he looked the roughest, toughest blackguard I ever saw — such is the result of exposure and a few days without soap or razors.

The ship was still rolling and pitching tremendously, but there was sense in her movements, due to the jib and her wheel being lashed amidships. I got to my feet, a bit stiff but unhurt, and as I did so, Mr. Hawks awoke. He looked at me with bloodshot eyes.

"Grummet," said he, slowly, "of all the toughs and hard cases I have ever seen, and I have seen a good few, you look the very worst!" Then with swift recollection, he cried, bounding up, "How 's the ship?"

Before I could answer, a figure darkened the doorway.

"Woke up, 'ave ye? The ship 's all right."

"Wilfred," I cried, "are *you* all right?"

"Nicely, thenks. Breakfarst 's ready!"

"What!" we both shouted.

"Well, y' see," said the little man, confidentially, "I 'ad some hours' start of you in sleepin', a thing I was never good at, any'ow, for you was two mortal hours a-setting that jib, you was; so I woke fust. The grub 's all right, kep' quite dry in them lockers, but I 'ad a job to set the blooming stove goin'."

We said no more; we gave hardly a glance at the ship as we crossed her swaying decks — at least, no more than to see that all was well. Then we three sat down in the galley together and ate and ate until we were full.

Our meal over, Mr. Hawks and I made a tour of inspection, and at the end of an hour we decided that the *Twin Brothers* was a fitting monument not only to her builder, but to ourselves, for our excellent repair work.

She was battered-looking, and appeared a wreck, but this was chiefly due to smashed railing, bent ventilators, and such superficial damage. We got sail upon her with Wilfred's help. Although we were without compass, sextant, or chart, it is not difficult to steer east and south, which course would land us on the broad side of the Americas.

There sprang up among us a curious relationship. We had known one another for many years, and there had always been a strong affection underlying the stern discipline of the sea; but now, in our common danger and our isolation, the ties between us strengthened.

We had plenty of provisions and water, which was fortunate, for the "cold" steamer, with all the sail we could spread upon her in the most favorable wind, made little over four miles an hour. So unless we were more than usually fortunate, it looked like a cruise of months before we should see land again. Mr. Hawks decided that should a ship turn up and offer us a tow, he would refuse it,

although he would borrow a man or two if he could.

But these arctic seas had not finished with us yet. We had been forced to delay so long, and had run so near the winter, that there were even chances of the ice closing in on us and holding us prisoners. This, bad enough in the *Effe Dean*, was not to be contemplated in the patched and battered steamer. It was obvious that the *Twin Brothers* would stand no pressure of ice upon her hull, she was not built for it, and two fields of ice closing upon her would nip us as effectually and flatten us as neatly as a kitten caught in the automatic doors of a water-tight compartment on a modern liner.

We must outwit the ice in some way, and as though to keep us at full tension, there came swinging down from the northeast and northwest two projecting tongues of ice that leveled the tempestuous sea as calm as a duck pond. To make matters desperate, the wind suddenly dropped.

Then began almost the most exasperating

and nerve-trying period of all our arctic adventures.

There we floated as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean, while to the west and east of us, driven forward by some deep-lying current we could not feel, the ice came on, a menacing foe, with steady persistence. The two projecting tongues opened like jaws to receive us. Already the points were abeam with only a mile or two of clear water on either side, and a cold, white, hazy calm enveloped all. Awaiting her inexorable fate, the *Twin Brothers* floated, gently screwing round, a helpless piece of drifting matter.

In a stamping fury, Mr. Hawks regarded the on-coming ice and chewed at his clipped mustache; Wilfred, quite unperturbed, continued to cook the meals with great economy of supplies, and a great variation of menu. I watched the ice and waited, rather sick at heart that after all this should be the end of our hard struggles; there is something terribly bitter in wasted human endeavor.

The fact that we could do nothing to help ourselves made our chagrin all the harder to bear, and I think that it speaks rather well for us that we remained upon peaceable terms with one another. But then we were all three rather intent upon this, and knew well the strains we would have to endure and the control each must keep upon his own temper, if we three lonely men were to live decently together. Fortunately, we had the great god of discipline to protect us. Mr. Hawks was commander, his minutest orders *must* be obeyed; he was captain of the ship, monarch — king — dictator; an absolute despot that, having gained his position by all the laws of the sea, must, by all the laws of the sea, be obeyed unquestioningly, and without comment. No wishy-washy talk about the equality of man, here! Nor could there be any humbling in obedience.

For three long days the ice played with us; it was almost as though it were a living thing possessed by a devilish humor, for it would

draw off and raise our hopes, then return, and each time it returned it came just a little nearer. Finally it was within fifty yards of the ship's sides, and gave us a most excellent view of its crushing thickness, and still no wind came and the great onward drifting masses of ice upon either side stretched away southward, leaving us in a lane of water with an ever decreasing gate to escape through into open water. To the northwest and northeast and north, and east, and west, and round to southeast and southwest there was nothing but ice, miles of ice. Only to the south there remained a passageway ever narrowing to the open sea beyond.

Then it began to close remorselessly in upon us.

It was the end of those three days of suspense; a bright, clear, exceedingly cold day with a low-lying sun and a stillness that was only occasionally broken by the grinding, tearing, and snapping of the straining field of ice.

Wilfred had been more fortunate than

either Mr. Hawks or myself, since his occupation of cooking continued, wind or no wind, whereas we had nothing to do but take sights and measure, by angles, the exact distance of the floe.

There appeared to be a general movement towards us from both sides, accompanied by great grindings and groanings from about a mile away where some unexpected current, playing upon a deep-floating berg, upset the general arrangement and started the ice moving in all directions, but principally towards closing up the water lane in which we floated.

"This time she's coming," said Mr. Hawks, almost with relief.

I swung off the bridge and walked to the galley.

"This time she's coming," I repeated.

"Desh it!" said Wilfred, and rolled a cigarette. Then he stepped on deck and looked about him.

"'Ow thick d'yer make it?" he asked.

"Average three feet," said I.

"Oh! Strike me blind!" he laughed. "One touch o' thet an' this old sardine tin will throw up its 'ands an' quit!" and he returned to his galley. "This 'ere is rather a bad joke," said he, through the doorway, and then began whistling "Everybody Loves a Lassie."

Mr. Hawks and I turned to preparing one of the two boats we had with us. We had already built an extra strake around her topsides and decked her forward with canvas. We could, if the worst came, do some considerable voyaging in this craft, but it was a slim reed to lean upon. But it was all that was left us to do, and we victualled her with the minutest care, fitting those foodstuffs that had the most nourishment to the square inch of bulk into a tight and serviceable form of ballast. She was rather a work of art, that boat, when we had finished, and was eloquent of our desperate need and past experiences. We even found some pleasure in the work, so complicated and vastly important was every detail. The nearest land was a very long way off, and the chances

of sighting a ship remote, and our experience of the arctic climate told us that in that boat we must expect to weather innumerable gales with heavy running seas, and blizzards with terribly low temperatures. Of course we would stay by the ice as long as the ice continued to drift southward; and as long as the ice remained intact, and as long as we had provisions, we were safe enough. So, we not only arranged the boat ready to drop over the side onto the ice, but brought out on deck a great pile of provisions.

There now seemed a set motion in the ice that differed with its former drift, and since the matter was decided we found some relief in certainty; all the same, it was an unpleasant sight to see the ice come crashing together ahead of us, leaving us imprisoned and floating in an ice-locked pool a bare half mile wide and only a few miles long. Simultaneously a brisk wind sprang up!

This was too much for Mr. Hawks' self-control. Had the breeze arrived an hour

earlier we would have been clear of the ice before it came together, and with open water ahead we would have been slogging along at the best pace we could raise towards the United States of North America! With an explosion of bitter wrath, Mr. Hawks shook both his mahogany fists.

Out came Wilfred and stood upon the main deck, the wind flapping his ragged clothes about, and gazed gravely up at Mr. Hawks with a look of understanding sympathy, for all the world as though he were not equally concerned in our fate.

Mr. Hawks stopped abruptly, cleared his throat and spat viciously into the sea. There was nothing comic in his anger; it was a strong man's rage at defeat after doing all in his power to gain a victory, and it was neither weak nor foolish.

With the wind that had played us so false, we worked the steamer bumping alongside the ice, and anchoring fore and aft, dropped the boat over and piled a great heap of provisions

by its side. It was the first time I had stepped upon an ice floe, and I found it covered with frozen snow and might have been the solid old earth for all the difference it presented to the feet. Having prepared everything, we clambered back on board the steamer.

I do not think that any of us slept that night, though the cold drove us into the cabin which we had made our joint living quarters. I had arrived at that stage of mind that is almost fatalistic, and though I did not sleep I lay comfortably warm in my blankets, waiting. Wilfred copied my example, and at the other side of the cabin lay bright-eyed, cutting up tobacco (of which we had a large supply) and rubbing it into shreds to make cigarettes out of. Mr. Hawks was savagely active, and was up and down all night, and the nights were growing longer than the days. Each time he returned from the deck, he reported the ice to be ever closer and always drawing in.

"Sit tight," said Wilfred, "an' do n't worrit no more; it's settled, I tell yer, settled an'

done with. We done our best; very well, nobody, not even George Washington, 'Polean Bonepart, or Dr. Cook could do more."

"Oh, I know," said Mr. Hawks, "but we'll be nipped tight sure as eggs is eggs."

"Eggs is sometimes partly-what chickens," answered Wilfred, sleepily.

Then, towards morning, we all three unexpectedly fell asleep. There was no particular object in staying awake, yet none of us had intended to fall asleep. We were awakened in a startling manner.

The *Twin Brothers* gave a sudden heave, like a man raising one shoulder, and Wilfred was sent flying from his resting place.

Inside two seconds we were all upon our feet, and making for the cabin stairway. As we did so, the ship as suddenly righted herself, and to all three of us, before we gained the deck, came the knowledge of what had happened. Our luck, after all, had not deserted us, and this was made plain when we reached the deck.

The ice was that known as "hummock," that is, uneven fields; and, due to previous pressure which had piled mass upon mass, and collected bergs upon the way, had become one solid uneven cake, cemented by the intense cold. Thus the edge was varying in thickness; in places it would be ten, twenty, thirty feet above the water; in others, the ice edge sloped down into the water like a rapidly shelving shore. And where the ice had happened to close upon us it was in this condition, and sliding beneath the round bottom of the ship had lifted her clear of danger, while the real ice edges met with grinding pressure far below her.

"The same happened to Nansen's *Fram*," cried Mr. Hawks, loudly; "that's why he had her built with a round bottom."

In less time than it takes to tell, we were down a rope and running round the ship, stumbling and falling over the rough surface of the ice. The pools of shallow water that still remained about the ship were rapidly

congealing, becoming opaque like hardening candle wax, giving us an excellent idea of what the temperature must be; and the old *Twin Brothers* was gathered up and frozen solid to the ice field.

"My word!" gasped Wilfred, "we *do* 'ave times, we do!" and this adequately expressed our views.

All movement for the *Twin Brothers* was, for the immediate future, settled. Where the ice went so would go the ship, and provided that the ice continued south all would be well. If the ice turned north — well, we did not think about the ice turning back again, there was no profit in such a speculation, and, moreover, it was the habit of the ice to drift southward and gradually melt. Many whalers have been caught in the ice, and if not crushed, are often carried far, and such a method has even been suggested as the easiest way of reaching the pole.

CHAPTER XIV

A CERTAIN peace had descended upon us that was very welcome after the acute anxiety of the previous days. The matter was settled for good or evil, and the *Twin Brothers*, rusty and weather-stained, with her long adventurous career behind her, was now but a minute particle of that vast field of ice. Since she afforded us the only shelter, and in such a climate some shelter is an absolute necessity, we must stay by the steamer as long as we could, and so we, in our turn, also became part of that world of ice.

A great stillness had come with the closing of the ice, a stillness only broken by the piping of the wind in the rigging of the *Twin Brothers*, and with the great stillness came a greater loneliness. It was like the end of man's tenancy of the earth, as though we three had been carried into the remote and terrible

future in H. G. Well's *Time Machine* and had arrived at a period when the earth had cooled and, covered with ice, continued to spin through unfathomable space for all eternity, a dead, used-up world. Both to Wilfred and myself this experience was new, and I, for one, shall never forget it. I was well used to Nature in her biggest moods, and to the busy, empty vastness of the sea; but here was something different, and so insistent was the impression, so remote and spacious, mysterious and cold, that I could well imagine a man alone going stark, staring mad after a few days. For the ice stretched away east and west and north of us, to the horizon and beyond, and the imagination grew weary tracing that limitless expanse. To the southward, nine miles (about) away, there still remained a rim of open sea, and to this we cast our eyes as though it had been a promised land. Now neither seas nor wind could touch us; we were like a toy boat nailed to a great raft of logs,

"We must sit on our hinders," said Wilfred placidly, "an' wait till things begin to 'appen."

Food we had in plenty, for the steamer had been victualled for a crew of five men during a possible six months' voyage; all the same, Wilfred, like all really first-class A1 cooks, was economical of supplies. It was a very extraordinary existence, for we were at sea, and yet not at sea. We lived in a ship, yet were not confined to its narrow limits. A ladder over the side led to endless miles of ice, though as a matter-of-fact we never went far from the ship. There was always the possibility of the ice splitting, for we were within about nine miles of the pack edge, and then there was always the possibility of holes only thinly covered, and a ducking in such a climate was just about what a strong man's life was worth.

Mr. Hawks continued to take our precise position every day the weather permitted, and we found that the course the ice was taking

continued to be south and east. This was good. In time we would arrive far enough south for the edge of the pack to soften and, breaking off in lumps, float away and gradually melt. As the floe pressed on, the melting edge, eating inwards, should, in the course of time, arrive at the *Twin Brothers* and set her free. Our main occupation now was that of waiting, and we settled ourselves down cheerfully enough.

I remember thinking how fortunate it was that chance had dictated that it should be Mr. Hawks, Cert'nly Wilfred, and myself to face this inactive vigil. To the best of men, isolated and inactive, there arrive little irritating difficulties of temperament. Men have quarreled and killed one another over trifles when living lives of protracted loneliness. But we three were each, in our separate ways, so wholly different superficially, and so much the same fundamentally, that, in spite of the bedrock of long friendship to build our conduct upon, a quarrel among us was really in-

conceivable. All the same, we were careful. When arguments arose — and they arose continually, it was one way of killing time — no one contradicted too flatly, or disagreed too absolutely, each man watching himself with a wary eye instead of watching the other fellow! It was admirable training!

We had vast discussions upon every subject, really quite abstruse arguments, and each of us having been for some years upon our journey through life, and having seen, heard, and lived through many experiences, had each something to say on most subjects. I think that we all made deliberate attempts to add to the general entertainment of each other, and we developed the excellent practice of singing. Wilfred had no voice and little ear for a tune, but that did not matter in the least; he had a wealth of words and yelled cockney songs about London, "Soufend," and 'Ackney Wick. Mr. Hawks sang negro melodies in a pleasingly simple manner, though with an untrained voice, and I contributed

popular melodies "like a bloomin' steam caliope," so Wilfred said; but then as my excuse, I must explain that the only training my voice had ever received was that caused by the necessity of being able to make myself heard above the noise of the stiffest gale.

"Go an' sing three miles away, Grummet," remarked Wilfred holding his ear; "I'm bruised, I am."

So the time passed.

The ice was not quite one compact mass; it changed from time to time. Numerous bergs that stood like hills amid a rough hewn plain moved oddly about. These movements were always accompanied by extraordinary and alarming sounds. The ice was a very big thing indeed, and its noises were consequently in proportion. It would grind and crash suddenly, and a berg would change its position for no conceivable reason, and pressing one way or another would gradually raise an acre or two of ice into an arch which, after a time, would give a stupendous crack and thunder

down with the noise of heavy guns. Or again, one section of ice, unknown miles long, would feel a current that did not influence the rest, and start boring its way slowly along, snapping vast chunks of ice, and send them flying, as a man squeezes an orange pip between finger and thumb. It was always changing and moving, though often a deep silence lay across the face of it while some inconceivable strain was going on somewhere, until something gave way with a thunderous crash.

Twice we saw bears; both times they were a long way off, and only discernible through the glasses, heavy, cumbrous yet agile white objects with black noses and a cloud of steamy breath, moving upon a white background with a curiously dignified precision.

"I seen 'em at the Zoo in Regent's Park," said Wilfred, deeply interested, with the glasses jammed to his eyes, "but it ain't 'arf so hinterstin' as seein' 'em wild-like."

Then, after five weeks of inaction, we had a surprising and startling adventure.

I have said that the ice was forever changing, and that bergs the size of hills would move, were undoubtedly for ever moving, apparently independently, and thus it was that a most surprising fact was hidden from us and only revealed in a startling manner.

We had made the cabin very comfortable. We kept a low fire going there night and day, for there was plenty of coal on board, and to us the cabin was all that means home. Not that it was so intensely cold; there were, no doubt, an appalling number of degrees of frost, and a temperature—which even in New York would fill that city with pride and paralyze all movement—was the coldest cold we had ever been in. But, after a time in the arctic one begins to measure the thermometer in an upside down sort of way and to look upon zero as summer weather. In the cabin spilt water froze on the instant, yet it was nice and warm in the cabin, quite snug and comfortable where a man's mustache and beard did not at once become solid, cemented by his

frozen breath. Mr. Hawks had sharpened a knife to razor condition and, in an unwise moment, shaven the growth of hair from his jaws, only to be attacked by violent toothache consequent upon the uncovered condition of his face. So we all decided to remain hairy as Russians, and that Nature, in her adaptability, knew a thing or two and was best left alone.

"Smooth-shaven faces are meant for civilization, I guess," said Mr. Hawks, and let his beard, mustache and whiskers and hair grow as long as they pleased.

"It'll turn to fur by and by, sir," said I. "I'm growing quite proud of my beard."

"Yes," answered Mr. Hawks nodding, "you almost look venerable."

We could wash in the cabin, and actually essayed a bath there once a week, but the bather was tacitly accorded the full hearth, and bathed almost in the fire itself. It was not an unmixed joy, still, a bath once a week is better than no bath at all, and the bathing

operation gave Wilfred a splendid opportunity for uncomplimentary remarks about Mr. Hawks and myself. But Wilfred had the best of the bathing business, as he could almost entirely disappear in the tub that Mr. Hawks and myself had to use more less as a sitz bath.

We did not keep watch at night, for there was no reason for wakefulness. If the ice was going to change in such manner as to crush us it would do so whether we were on watch or not, and in the face of an uncertain future a wise man takes all the sleep and comfort he can get. But one day the ice appeared more active than usual. About a mile away was a separate tongue of ice that moved ahead faster than the rest, and its propelling force was apparently due to a vast and splendid berg that probably floated so deep as to feel some current that did not affect the rest. We watched this performance uneasily for some hours. This separate mass was disturbing the rest, was causing upheaval all round, and might, so hope whispered, break up that part of the

pack and set us free. It might also — and it was just as likely — send us to the bottom in the general rearrangement of affairs.

However, it was no good worrying, so we turned in, and after lengthy arguments upon the Running-down Clause in Marine Insurance; why extreme heights should make a man feel giddy; and who Isaac Barrow was, we fell asleep.

At some indefinite time later, I was sleepily aware that Mr. Hawks went on deck, and a moment or two later I was very wide-awake. So, also, was Wilfred.

Mr. Hawks stood in the cabin doorway.

"Just come on deck, you two," said he, and there was a curious, an unusual note in his voice. It was obvious that Mr. Hawks had been considerably startled.

Inside two seconds Wilfred and I were climbing the stairs, grasping old Protheroe's four-inch handrail as we took three steps at a time.

The night was still and moonlit, not very

clear, with a strange, white, opaque light that was due to moonlight, the ice, and reflection. It was a weird, eerie scene, for just then the ice was making no sound, and the intense stillness emphasized the dead, unnatural remoteness of it all, and we stood with our breath rising in gray smoke, and in the cold, white, silvery world could dimly make out the hummock ice fading away for miles upon every hand. We looked at Mr. Hawks interrogatively.

"Listen," said he, "maybe it'll come again."

Perhaps a minute of almost breathless listening followed.

"What was it you 'eard?" gasped Wilfred in a whisper, unable to contain himself longer.

"I heard a voice," said Mr. Hawks slowly.

"A voice, sir?" I asked, startled.

"'Ave you gone barmy in the crump?" exclaimed Wilfred, amazed.

"It was a curious voice," said Mr. Hawks, slowly, "it startled me."

"In what was it curious, sir?" I asked, suddenly conscious that Mr. Hawks' state of nerves was catching.

"I do n't know," he answered, very deliberately, as though he were forcing himself to speak quietly and slowly, "I do n't know."

"Where from?" asked Wilfred, shortly, and eyeing Mr. Hawks with an emphatic stare.

"Over there," Mr. Hawks answered, and waved his arm in an indefinite way to where there rose dimly the fading white bulk of a large iceberg.

Wilfred did not look in the direction indicated, but continued to watch Mr. Hawks with an uneasy minuteness.

"A man's voice?" he asked.

"No."

"One of these 'ere harctic animiles?"

"No."

"S'truth! Somethink queer, y' mean? Wot carn't be explained?"

"I do n't know. Wait and listen."

Many people laugh at what they are pleased to call sailor's superstitions, but it is only their ignorance that makes them laugh. To a man born and bred to the roar of cities, or the intermittent sound of a populous countryside, all things are mediocre and ordinary and explainable. It is not until a man, or a small group of men, is far away and surrounded by great distances from one's fellows, where man is no longer the predominating influence but only a scarcely perceivable atom, that he realizes that there are things that cannot be explained, and which he must accept as unexplainable. These things are perfectly natural, but we do not happen to know what they are; they are as incomprehensible as a thunderstorm was to our ancestors, the cave men.

Then we heard it.

It was high, yet it was guttural; it had a human ring to it; it came to us as from a great distance, but clearly, on account of the stillness, and it was certainly not caused by any arctic animal or by the ice. It was not pre-

cisely a cry of pain, yet was one of acute distress, and there was rage in it — insane, baffled rage. It was quite horrible.

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Wilfred, softly. "'Ere *is* somethink worth knowin' an' no mistake!" and wheeling about he disappeared into the chart-house, and we heard his steps rapidly descending the stairs.

Mr. Hawks and myself were uncomfortably aware of losing a third of our forces. In less than a minute, Wilfred reappeared buckling on his revolver. He crossed the deck to where the ladder was slung over the side to the ice.

"Come on," said he, "let's go an' see what it is!"

Mr. Hawks shook his head. "We must wait till there is a better light," said he. "It's about as much as a man's life is worth to cross the ice in this uncertain light."

Wilfred paused, irresolute.

"Nice fix we'd be in with one of us with a broken leg," added Mr. Hawks quietly.

"That's so," said Wilfred, thoughtfully, and leaned his arms on the bulwarks.

Again there came that sound, and I was dimly conscious that in some way it was familiar, but whatever familiarity it might have, it belonged to some totally different set of circumstances, and I racked my brains to think of what it could be.

At length, we returned to the cabin to wait for daylight, and we sat round the fire talking endlessly upon the one subject, and reviewing in order each animal that might be upon the ice and give tongue to such a cry. Finally, Wilfred made a suggestion that had been in all our minds.

"D'you think as 'ow it might be a man gone dotty-like?"

"That's what I have been wondering," said Mr. Hawks, "and if it is a man, I guess he's pretty blame dotty to make a row like that!"

We talked and dozed and dozed and talked, and at length the daylight came. Without

thought of food, we started forth across the ice towards where the sound had appeared to come from. At all costs we must find out, explain the unexplained, for it is not in the white man's composition to take things too readily for granted, though an explorer of two hundred years ago would doubtless have logged the sounds as those of demoniacal agency, and been content with that.

It was difficult and precarious going, and took us nearly an hour to do a mile, and then, rounding a projecting shoulder of the gigantic berg we had noticed the day before, we all three shouted together.

A two-masted schooner, her foresail still intact, but with all other canvas torn to ribbons and flapping dismally in the cold wind, rested jammed in the ice.

"Crushed, by gum, a derelict!" shouted Mr. Hawks.

"Didyerever!" screamed Wilfred, his feet shooting from under him, and landing him with a smack on the ice.

"But if she's a derelict, what the 'Umpty Dumpty made the row?"

We hurried on, and each in turn read aloud: "*Goasker*. Portland, Oregon," on her stern.

She was badly nipped, one side of her bulged inwards, and the moment the ice parted and let her through she would sink like a stone. It was no wonder that her people had left her. We were not long in climbing aboard, and Mr. Hawks held up his hand in sudden warning. Together we clung to the outside of her bulwarks and looked down upon her littered decks that had buckled upwards with the pressure of the ice all round, and there arose from the shelter of what had once been her galley a very large, terribly lean, emaciated, razor-backed hog with the madly savage look of a starving animal. Owing to our approach having been from the leeward, and the wind strong and piping loudly in the derelict's rigging, the pig had not heard us, and still unaware of our pres-

ence stood looking away from us round the corner of the deckhouse. So thin was it, that I could see its heart palpitating against its drawn sides. The pig, ferocious with hunger, was watching something, and we all three turned to see what it was. Forward, by the forecastle, was a long lean rat, intensely searching for scraps, and next moment the pig had charged. The rat escaped by a miracle, and instantly the pig gave a guttural scream of rage and shook with an insane fury that was positively shocking to see! Starvation had turned that pig into as dangerous a wild animal as I would ever care to meet, and it took me some moments to hammer the fact into my head that this was — or rather once had been — a homely old porker; then there passed in swift review some things that I knew about shipwrecked sailors, and what starvation could do to decent, civilized men.

“Oh, my 'at!” cried Wilfred, and at the first sound of his voice the pig wheeled about, and for a second stood glaring at us; then it

charged. Fortunately for us, the bulwark was between us, and when it found we were out of reach the pig again gave forth that terrible cry of insane, baffled rage that had so startled us in the night.

"He was hunting rats," said Mr. Hawks.

"Pore feller!" cried Wilfred, sympathetically, "pig-pig-pig-pig-pig-pig."

"They might have shot it instead of leaving it to starve to death," said Mr. Hawks, angrily.

"What's to be done?" said I, "it's not safe on deck."

"Safe!" exclaimed Mr. Hawks, "he'd go for you like a mad dog!" and he drew his revolver. "Poor brute," said he, "he's a man-eater by now. I'd a sight sooner meet a polar bear!" and he pulled the trigger.

"I'd like to meet the men wot left 'im 'ere ter starve, so I would," remarked Wilfred, savagely. "I'd give 'em an insight inter the darker side of the Hinglish lankwidge, s'elp me I would!"

When we examined the dead pig, we found it to be in a terrible state of emaciation — a real little tragedy (if tragedies of any sort can be called "little"!). Several casks that had once contained food of some sort lay empty about the deck where the starving animal had dragged them. How long the pig and the rats had been sole occupants of that wreck we could not say, and upon a closer examination of the pig we guessed that at times it must have been attacked by the rats in turn. Then we turned our attention to the ship. She was a newfangled, "jim-crack" iron affair, cheap materials, cheap work, a shameful monument to her builders. She must have buckled at the first touch of the ice; about as seaworthy as a tin bucket, and as fragile as a Chinese junk. The old *Effie Dean* was a "Dreadnought" in comparison!

"Modern work," said Mr. Hawks, acidly, "no time or money to build wooden ships nowadays. Quarter-inch iron plates pinned together, iron masts, wire rigging, newfang-

led bilge pump that jams, God help the men that go to sea in her and a fat owner ashore insuring his ships and pocketing dividends — a scum of the earth!”

“All that,” agreed Wilfred, hitching up his trousers. “Oh, ’Arry, wot a ’ooker!”

We turned to her living quarters, and descending the companion, found the iron doors of the cabin jammed tight, owing to her squeezing in the ice, like the doors of a house after an earthquake. Round the doors were innumerable scratches.

“Pig tried to get in here,” said Mr. Hawks, examining the scratches curiously.

“The rats, too, sir,” said I, and pressed against the doors. They were already bent inwards by the twisted condition of the ship, and they gave visibly to my weight.

“Gently now, Grummet,” cautioned Wilfred “recollec’ that pore mounting yer nearly carried away on thet hisland.”

Mr. Hawks put his shoulder with mine and we got a good foothold on the stairs. With a

sudden rasping jerk the doors gave inwards and Mr. Hawks and I fell into the cabin after them.

At the cabin table sat the figure of a man.

"My God!" said Mr. Hawks.

Together we three stood in the doorway like frightened children, and as we stood, the swivel chair in which the figure was seated, swung slowly round, and without bending, it fell with a horrid sound against the table.

Mr. Hawks wiped his hand across his face as though it had been wet.

"Bin dead a long time an' frozen stiff," said Wilfred, in a gloriously matter-of-fact voice, "pore bloke!"

"Those scratches on the door," commented Mr. Hawks, grimly, and together we advanced.

He was a gray-whiskered man, and it added to the acuteness of the scene that he should appear the very picture of benevolent respectability. He might have been dead an hour or two from his appearance.

"Those men on the island, sir, were skeletons," I said in a whisper.

"Precisely, they died two years ago," said Mr. Hawks, "and became skeletons, more or less, in the summer. This poor beggar died since the winter set in. Why, in Grinnell Land I've recognised a man that had been dead ten years."

"'E give us a turn, 'e did," remarked Wilfred, "I 'ave n't jumped like that since my mother 'it me on the 'ead with a rollin'-pin for pinchin' apples."

"We must see if we can find out who he is," said Mr. Hawks, rather reluctantly. "We must bury him, somehow, and report his death to his family if we can find out who and where they are."

"'E ain't starved an' 'e ain't shot, nor bashed on the 'ead," said Wilfred. "'Ow could 'e die? Arnswer me that!"

"Heart disease?" I suggested, "an attack brought on by the ship getting crushed. The rest thought the ship was sinking, the cabin

doors were jammed, the rest did n't know he was in here because he was dead and did not answer, and they in a hurry to leave."

"Very possible," said Mr. Hawks.

"Funny crowd," remarked Wilfred, shortly, and there was a note of extreme contempt in his voice. "They must 'ave bin scared for their pore little lives."

"Yes, little lives," agreed Mr. Hawks, "mighty little. I guess we 'll discuss this matter on deck," and he turned towards the door.

He gained the open air first, and the next moment his voice rang out.

"On deck with you!" he shouted.

"What now!" gasped Wilfred, and became as active as a fine steel watch spring, and shot up the companion stairs. "Blister me kidneys!" he yelled, "th' hicc!!"

A great lane of water was opening out to westward, and the whole pack for miles round was in disturbance; a strong westerly wind was blowing warm and wet.

"It's back to the ship," cried Mr. Hawks,

"the pack's breaking up; I guess this burying business is out of *our* hands."

On rounding a shoulder of the berg that had hidden the wreck from our sight, we saw the *Twin Brothers*, and her appearance startled us more than we had been startled on the wreck. The ice was all in commotion; it seemed likely that we would never get back, and the *Twin Brothers*, no longer upon an even keel, listed to starboard and was down by the head. While we were yet half a mile off, and struggling over the ice, she suddenly righted herself, ringing like a dinner gong.

"She's floa — otin'!" gasped Wilfred, breathless with action.

At least twenty-four hours ago, the pack must have encountered a warmer current that had caused the disturbance we had noticed the previous day, and now the pack was obviously breaking up, or at least that portion of it where we were situated. How we regained the *Twin Brothers* I hardly remember distinctly. It was a desperate scramble for life

and three times we had to jump openings in the ice I would have thought hardly possible at ordinary times. The thought of floating off on a fragment of ice lent us wings, and we eventually arrived positively sobbing for breath.

Mr. Hawks and myself were bad enough, but Wilfred was beyond speech, for his cough had taken most of his strength, and he had traveled the last half mile on nervous energy alone. When he could speak, he launched forth into an abusive tirade at the indignity of being made to run!

The ship was floating on an ever widening lake of sea, and about us the ice was snarling and cracking and grinding, great masses of it plashing off from the main body, and with delighted shouts we got sail upon the *Twin Brothers*; but there still remained a barrier of broken ice to southward too heavy for us to dare to charge, though we nosed our way in, performing some curious seamanship in the process.

By evening, we beheld open water stretching blessedly clear to southward, an open road to the ends of all the earth!

CHAPTER XV

NEVER shall I forget what it was like to feel the old *Twin Brothers* once more lift to the unencumbered sea. It was like the resurrection of the beloved dead; it was life after death!

The warm, wet westerly breeze, increasing to a gale, raised the sea, and the ship, with her odd canvas, plunged and wallowed along at three miles an hour, no longer a subject for laughter, but a beloved friend. We laughed and sang; ran shouting out of reach of the seas shipped over the starboard quarter, like children playing on the sea beach, and we told the gale to blow, and keep on blowing till the cows came home.

It was a mad ship's company, and a mad ship, and it would not have been difficult to imagine the old *Twin Brothers* as taking part in our hilarity as she wallowed and plunged

and staggered and rolled, a lumbering, reeling, rust-streaked ship, free to go where we chose.

It was a queer life, sailing that steamless steamer over that most deserted of oceans, and we often wondered how Peter Scott and young Mr. Green were getting on with the mutinous crew. They would, of course, decide that we were drowned, sail the schooner back to San Francisco, and report the melancholy news.

Wilfred made many improvements in the galley, and was as busy as a bee. Extremely cheerful and active, the little man was always singing cockney songs as he worked.

He was troubled with the galley stove, which would not draw properly, and so he looked about for something to use for what he called a "chimley." I was at the wheel, and Mr. Hawks seated forward upon the deck, putting a patch in a jib that had ripped. We had been ten weeks on the *Twin Brothers* then, and were thoroughly used to our predicament.

Wilfred entered the charthouse with an axe, bent upon destruction, and proceeded upon his search for his "chimley." He was singing, and I could hear him hammering diligently as I nursed the steamer through the seas.

Oh, I 'ear the London buses
Go a-rolling all the d'y.
From Crickelwood and Hislington
And 'Emmersmith Broadw'y;
And there ain't no sound thet 's like it
Wherever you 'ave been,
To bring you 'ome crost all the world
To 'ear them cry' ag—

"Wot the good gryshus, glorious, glittering—" There came a pause.

"What's the matter?" I called.

"Nothink, a mere trifle!" he called back, and after a moment he appeared, and his yellow eyes shone very bright.

"Want to see 'Awks jump proper?" he asked, and went down to the forward deck.

He crossed, swaying to the movement of the

ship, and bent over Mr. Hawks, holding something out in the palm of his hand.

Mr. Hawks glanced at it, and then leaped to his feet as if he had received a shock of electricity.

"What —" I began.

"Pearls!" cried Mr. Hawks. "Black pearls!" and the two came racing up the ladder and dashed into the charthouse.

Slipping a lashing over the wheel, I followed them.

Wilfred had conceived the idea of using the heavy iron pipe that formed the handrail down the cabin stairs as his "chimley." In loosening it, he had knocked the wooden knob from one end, and there had come a steady stream of pearls of all sizes, together with several thousand five-dollar pieces and English sovereigns, all of which, gold pieces and pearls, now lay in a considerable heap upon the floor.

"This 'ere," said Wilfred, "is Capting Protheroe's fortunel!"

There lies at her moorings, off Sausalito, a schooner-rigged yacht. Her name has roused the curiosity of many people throughout the world, for her frequent cruises extend all over the seven seas. She is called the *Twin Brothers*, and she belongs to Mr. Hawks.

If he is asked how his yacht comes by so un-yachtlike a name, he casually mentions that he has called her after a ship he once owned that had a good deal to do with his fortunes.

When the yacht goes cruising to China, to India, to the South Sea Islands, to the Mediterranean, to the Baltic, or wherever Mr. Hawks may fancy, she is commanded by her owner, assisted by myself as mate, Peter Scott as second mate, and Cert'nly Wilfred as cook. Mr. Hawks is famed for his dinners.

I may mention here that the only work Cert'nly Wilfred and I ever do nowadays is when we are upon these trips, for we are both of us very comfortably off as regards money, and really have no need to work at all.

The "pirate," as Mr. Hawks still calls the

pretended Captain Protheroe, we never saw again. He set sail from the island as soon as the gale had blown itself out, and two days before Peter Scott worked the *Effie Dean* out of the harbor, after a fruitless search for our bodies.

Young Green went home, where they hardly knew him, and is now a junior partner in his father's business and lives in Chicago. I have not seen him since, but Wilfred, returning from a trip home to Hack Street, Tidal Basin, North Woolwich, London, stayed a few days in Chicago, where he was vigorously entertained the whole time by young Green and his father and mother and sister. I should have liked to see Wilfred being rushed round in a gorgeous automobile and housed in a millionaire's residence!

I believe the little man made an excellent impression, and was precisely the same in Chicago as he was on the island, for circumstances could not alter Wilfred; he generally altered circumstances.

But Wilfred and I had a surprise. The Japanese caught the pearl poacher they were after; it was not the *Twin Brothers*, so where and how Captain Protheroe came by his fortune is still a mystery. Anyhow, Mr. Hawks got it, and he gave a good fat share to Protheroe's brother — which he need not have done — and was the richer by a steamer.

Mr. Hawks, Wilfred, and I remain very much the same.

We are restless spirits, and are generally at sea, cruising in the yacht. Our crew of picked men have grown accustomed to our ways, for there is little of the kid-glove yacht captain and mate about us. And although our cruises are generally on pleasure bent, as Wilfred says, "Somethink gen'rally 'appens."

THE END

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